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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

### LIFE OF ARNOLD.

MATTHEW ARNOLD, the eldest son of Dr. Thomas Arnold, the famous Headmaster of Rugby and historian of Rome, was born on the 24th December 1822, at Laleham near Staines, a small village on the banks of the Thames. His first public school was Winchester, from which, after a year, he went on to Rugby where he stayed from 1837 to 1841, winning a prize for a poem on *Aluric*. In 1840, he won a classical scholarship at Balliol College, Oxford, and went into residence the following year. At Oxford he became intimately acquainted with Arthur Hugh Clough whom he afterwards commemorated in his great elegy of *Thyrsis*, one of the noblest elegies in the language. Among other friends that he made at this time and who afterwards rose to distinction, may be mentioned Professor Jowett, Dean Stanley, and Lord Chief Justice Coleridge. While at Oxford, Arnold won the Hertford Scholarship, the chief University distinction awarded for proficiency in Latin, and in June 1843, he won the 'Newdigate' or University Prize for English verse by a poem on Cromwell. As a student, Arnold was not hardworking, and though his classical attainments were of a very high order, he took only a second class when he graduated with honours in 1844. The following year he was elected a Fellow of Oriel College, and with this his University career closed. It only remains to be said that Arnold had a deep and abiding love for his University, and that the influence of Oxford made itself



felt in all his ways of thinking and writing. He was essentially an Oxford scholar and gentleman.

His first appointment after leaving Oxford was under Lord Landsdowne to whom he became Private Secretary in 1847. Lord Landsdowne was at that time Lord President of the Council, an office which included among its duties the management and control of public education, and, in the exercise of his patronage, Lord Landsdowne appointed Arnold a Lay Inspector of Schools in 1851. In what manner Arnold discharged his official duties and to what extent he helped forward the cause of education in England it is unnecessary here to discuss. For twenty years he filled the office of a School Inspector and wrote many able and interesting reports on schools and schoolmasters and on educational questions and systems; but, however useful his labours in the field of education may have been, one cannot help feeling that his powers would have been better employed in contributing more largely to the literature of his country than in writing official reports which are of little profit or interest to the world at large. Arnold's wanderings as an Inspector brought him into the closest touch with people belonging to the great English middle class, and the experience he acquired made him keenly alive to their deficiencies. He perceived how dull and dismal was the kind of life they led, how inaccessible they were to new ideas, how cramped and narrow in their views and judgments, and yet how full of self-complacency. To this attitude and state of mind he gave the name of Philistinism, and he was never tired of denouncing the Philistines, as he called them, and all their ways, their hatred of light and their regard for what was only material and practical. The one thing needed to raise them out of this condition was education, and he made it almost the business of his life to preach for them the need of a higher culture, which he

regarded as 'the study of perfection, the sentiment for beauty and sweetness, the sentiment against hideousness and rawness.' The same year in which he was appointed Inspector of Schools, Arnold was married. In 1857, he was elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and two years later he was sent by Government as Commissioner to enquire into the state of education on the Continent, and more especially in France, Germany and Holland. A second visit which he paid to the Continent was for the same purpose in 1835. As a result of his enquiries and of the experience gained by him, he drew up some masterly reports in which he showed up the defects of English middle class education and made valuable suggestions for its improvement. In 1883, Mr. Gladstone conferred on him a pension of £250 in recognition of his services to the poetry and literature of England. In the same year he visited America and delivered a course of lectures in the United States. The degree of LL.D. was conferred on him by the Universities of Oxford and Edinburgh. There is little to add to the story of his uneventful life. He paid a second visit to America in 1886, and retired from official work in the same year. His death was rather sudden at Liverpool, on Sunday, 15th of April, 1888.

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Arnold made his first appearance as an author in 1849 when he published a volume of poems, *The Strayed Reveller and other Poems by A.* Among other poems included in the volume were *Mycerinus*, *The Forsaken Mermaid*, *To a Gipsy Child on the Sea-shore*, and *Resignation*. The volume did not attract much attention and there were few perhaps who recognised the merits of the new poet. In 1852, a second volume of poems appeared entitled *Empedocles on Etna and other Poems by A.* Among the poems contained in this volume, besides *Empedocles*, were *Tristram and*

*Iseult, Faded Leaves, Morality, The Buried Life, and Line Written in Kensington Gardens.* Very soon after publication, however, this volume was withdrawn, the author, it is said, being dissatisfied with *Empedocles on Etna*. The following year Arnold appeared as a poet for the first time in his own name. The volume he published under the title of *Poems by Matthew Arnold* contained, besides other pieces that had already appeared, two of his best known poems, *Sohrab and Rustum* and the *Scholar-Gipsy*. In 1855, *Balder Dead* was given to the world in a *Second Series of Poems by Matthew Arnold*. Two years later, *Merope* was published, a drama modelled on the Greek Tragedy. This was Arnold's one dramatic effort and it proved a failure. After this Arnold seems for a time to have given up writing poetry and to have turned his attention to prose. In 1865 appeared his *Essays on Criticism*, and in 1867, his *Essay On the Study of Celtic Literature*. In the same year, he published another volume of poetry, *New Poems by Matthew Arnold*. In this volume besides *Empedocles on Etna* which was republished at the request of Robert Browning, some of Arnold's best poems made their appearance, *Thyrsis, Stanzas from Carnac, A Southern Night, Rugby Chapel* and *Saint Brandan*. After this appeared a great many *Essays* on a variety of subjects:—*Culture and Anarchy* in 1869, *Literature and Dogma* in 1873, *God and the Bible* in 1875, *Last Essays on Church and State* in 1877, and *Mixed Essays* in 1879.

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It is not easy to fix Arnold's position as a poet. That he was a poet of very considerable merit in the Victorian Age, ranking next only to Tennyson and Browning and Swinbourne, may be readily enough admitted, but he himself would have been the first to repudiate the pretensions put forward by some of his admirers who would claim him as a *great poet*.

His limitations as a poet are obvious. He wrote poetry like a well-bred scholar and gentleman of high culture and refined taste, polished in his tone, polished in his language, and polished in his sentiments, with his feelings kept well under control, and with a strong aversion to everything that savoured of extravagance and exaggeration. In this way the personality of the man is reflected in his poetry. But beautiful in form as many of his poems are, with grace and elegance and thought combined, the afflatus of the great poet is wanting, the enthusiasm, the fine frenzy, the imagination that bodies forth the form of things unknown. He was too severe, too cold, too constrained, to prove attractive to most readers. Steeped in classical knowledge, intensely classical in his tastes, Arnold gave to his poems an austerity that was essentially Greek in its character. In his poem on the *Austerity of Poetry*, he writes,—

“The Muse ! young, gay,  
Radiant, adorned outside ; *a hidden ground*  
*Of thought and of austerity within.*”

Like Wordsworth in his love of nature and in the simplicity of his language, he resembled Wordsworth, whose influence he greatly felt, in this also that he often-times put too much *thought* into his verse. The imagination is not sufficiently appealed to, the emotions are not sufficiently stirred : there is, in fact, too much of the intellect. The voice that is heard in his poetry is too often the voice of Emerson or of Goethe. The thought may be wholesome enough and even beautiful, but wise and philosophic thought is not what the ordinary reader usually looks for in poetry. Having regard both to the quantity and quality of his poetry, one cannot help feeling that Arnold wrote with some effort ; that his verse was not the spontaneous outpourings of a poet who

sings because he must. Dignity of thought and dignity of sentiment, grace and elegance and purity, all these things may be conceded to the poet, but they are not everything in poetry. One curious defect in Arnold's poetry is the want of rhythm in many of his lines. To a sensitive ear, a jarring note is often heard in his verses. Men of culture and of classical tastes will continue to admire Arnold, and keenly appreciate him, but it may confidently be asserted that he never will be a popular poet in the years to come as he never was a popular poet in his own time.

Arnold, it is well-known, viewed poetry and literature always in their relation to life and its conduct; and, without exactly defining it as such, he referred to poetry as being under certain conditions 'a criticism of life.' Let us try to gather from some of his poems what he thought of life. In *Rugby Chapel*, which contains a noble tribute to his father, he asks:—

"What is the course of the life  
Of mortal men on the earth?"

And he answers the question thus:

"Most men eddy about  
Here and there, eat and drink,  
Chatter and love and hate,  
Gather and squander, are raised  
Aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,  
Striving blindly, achieving  
Nothing; and then they die—  
Perish;—and no one asks  
Who or what they have been,  
More than he asks what waves,  
In the moonlit solitudes mild  
Of the midmost ocean, have swell'd  
Foamed for a moment, and gone."

Only a few there are like his father,—

“Souls tempered with fire,  
Fervent, heroic and good,  
Helpers and friends of mankind.”

As for the great majority, they

“Bluster or cringe, and make life  
Hideous and arid and vile.”

Is there anything like real joy in this world? Can we derive any real happiness from the things outside us? Here is his answer:

“Ah love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.”

*Dover Beach.*

Life, he tells us, is full of disappointments and delusions:—

“We but dream we have our wish’d-for powers,  
Ends we seek we never shall attain.”

*Self-Deception.*

If then the world has nothing to give us, if there is nothing worth striving for in life, how are we to regulate our lives and where are we to find satisfaction?

The answer is:—

“The aids to noble life are all within.”

*Worldly Place.*

And again we are told,—

“ Resolve to be thyself ; and know that he  
Who finds himself, loses his misery ! ”

*Self-Dependence.*

Labour is man's portion in life : *that* we cannot avoid  
but let us see to it that our labour is free from vain turmoil  
from all those passionate desires that can never be satisfied  
and that only disturb and distract our minds. Let us learn  
from Nature what Nature alone can teach, the lesson

“ Of toil, unsevered from tranquillity.”

*Quiet Work.*

Unaffected by the things around us, undisturbed by vain  
longings and regrets, let us try to live like the stars in  
heaven, with serene indifference, for—

“ Unaffrighted by the silence round them,  
Undistracted by the sights they see,  
These demand not that the things around them,  
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.”

*Self-Dependence.*

The secret of life then is not Joy, but Peace. It is peace  
of mind that we must all seek. ‘ Calm me, ah, compose me  
to the end,’ the poet exclaims, addressing the stars in his  
poem of *Self-Dependence* ; and the same passionate cry for  
Peace is heard in those beautiful *Lines Written in Kensington  
Gardens* :—

“ Calm soul of all things ! make it mine  
To feel amid the city's jar,  
That there abides a peace of thine,  
Man did not make and cannot mar.  
The will to neither strive nor cry,  
The power to feel with others give !  
Calm, calm me more, nor let me die  
Before I have begun to live.”

So Arnold wrote with an undertone of melancholy in his verses, but what seems strange is that one to whom was ever present what he 'calls the sense of tears in mortal things,' to whom was ever audible the 'eternal note of sadness' in the world, was anything but a melancholy or unsociable man. Bright and cheerful and sympathetic, the sights and sounds of the world were dear to him we are told, and he was ever on the side of human enjoyment. Whatever he may have given utterance to in his poetry, he was a man deeply interested in the joys and sorrows of men, in their loves, and in all their relationships.

Besides being a poet, Arnold, as everybody knows, was a very distinguished prose-writer of the Victorian Age. He wrote on a great variety of subjects, on life, on literature, and on politics, and even made excursions into the domain of theology much to the regret of his friends who would rather that he stuck to poetry. During the latter half of his life, after he had abandoned poetry, he devoted himself to the work of criticism which, he declared, has "for its main function to understand and utter the best that is known and thought in the world." It may be admitted that he raised literary criticism to a higher level than it had ever reached before in England, but though his essays will always be pleasant reading, written as they are in a clear style with plenty of good sense in them, it may be doubted whether many of his critical judgments will stand the test of time. The canons of criticism are never the same, and the tastes of men vary from generation to generation. Arnold was sometimes erratic in his opinions and gave expression to strange views, as when he declared that in poetry everything depended on the subject, and that poetry is a criticism of life. Writing as he did on all



kinds of subjects, in a dainty and affected manner as it seemed, without any great depth of thought, there were many who did not give him credit for earnestness of purpose. They did not take him seriously, or, at any rate as seriously as he deserved, and were disposed to regard him as 'a fanciful, finical Oxonian,' and as 'a prophet of the kid-glove persuasion.' There can be no reason to doubt, however, that he was thoroughly in earnest in the gospel that he preached, 'the best of everything for everybody,' and that his was a genuine desire to promote the moral and intellectual condition of his countrymen and to infuse into their lives, so 'hideous and arid and vile,' as it seemed to him, some little of 'sweetness and light.'

# BALDER DEAD

## I. SENDING

So on the floor lay Balder dead ; and round  
Lay thickly strewn swords, axes, darts, and spears,  
Which all the Gods in sport had idly thrown  
At Balder, whom no weapon pierced or clove ;  
But in his breast stood fixt the fatal bough 5  
Of mistletoe, which Lok the Accuser gave  
To Hoder, and unwitting Hoder threw—  
'Gainst that alone had Balder's life no charm.

And all the Gods and all the Heroes came,  
And stood round Balder on the bloody floor, 10  
Weeping and wailing ; and Valhalla rang  
Up to its golden roof with sobs and cries ;  
And on the tables stood the untasted meats,  
And in the horns and gold-rimm'd skulls the wine.  
And now would night have fall'n, and found them yet  
Wailing ; but otherwise was Odin's will.  
And thus the Father of the ages spake :—

“ Enough of tears, ye Gods, enough of wail !  
Not to lament in was Valhalla made.  
If any here might weep for Balder's death, 20  
I most might weep, his father ; such a son  
I lose to-day, so bright, so loved a God.  
But he has met that doom, which long ago  
The Nornies, when his mother bare him, spun,

And fate set seal that so his end must be. 2  
Balder has met his death, and ye survive—  
Weep him an hour, but what can grief avail?  
For ye yourselves, ye Gods, shall meet your doom,  
All ye who hear me, and inhabit Heaven,  
And I too, Odin too, the Lord of all. 3  
But ours we shall not meet, when that day comes,  
With women's tears and weak complaining cries—  
Why should we meet another's portion so?  
Rather it fits you, having wept your hour,  
With cold dry eyes, and hearts composed and stern  
To live, as erst, your daily life in Heaven.  
By me shall vengeance on the murderer Lok,  
The foe, the accuser, whom, though Gods, we hate,  
Be strictly cared for, in the appointed day.  
Meanwhile, to-morrow, when the morning dawns, 4  
Bring wood to the seashore to Balder's ship,  
And on the deck build high a funeral-pile,  
And on the top lay Balder's corpse, and put  
Fire to the wood, and send him out to sea  
To burn; for that is what the dead desire." 4

So spake the King of Gods, and straightway rose,  
And mounted his horse Sleipner, whom he rode;  
And from the hall of Heaven he rode away  
To Lidskialf, and sate upon his throne,  
The mount, from whence his eye surveys the world.  
And far from Heaven he turn'd his shining orbs  
To look on Midgard, and the earth, and men.  
And on the conjuring Lapps he bent his gaze  
Whom antler'd reindeer pull over the snow;  
And on the Finns, the gentlest of mankind,

Fair men, who live in holes under the ground ;  
Nor did he look once more to Ida's plain,  
Nor tow'rd Valhalla, and the sorrowing Gods ;  
For well he knew the Gods would heed his word,  
And cease to mourn, and think of Balder's pyre. 60

But in Valhalla all the Gods went back  
From around Balder, all the Heroes went ;  
And left his body stretch'd upon the floor.  
And on their golden chairs they sate again,  
Beside the tables, in the hall of Heaven ; 65  
And before each the cooks who served them placed  
New messes of the boar Serimner's flesh,  
And the Valkyries crown'd their horns with mead.  
So they, with pent-up hearts and tearless eyes,  
Wailing no more, in silence ate and drank, 70  
While twilight fell, and sacred night came on.

But the blind Hoder left the feasting Gods  
In Odin's hall, and went through Asgard streets,  
And past the haven where the Gods have moor'd  
Their ships, and through the gate, beyond the wall ;  
Though sightless, yet his own mind led the God.  
Down to the margin of the roaring sea.  
He came, and sadly went along the sand,  
Between the waves and black o'erhanging cliffs  
Where in and out the screaming sea-fowl fly ; 80  
Until he came to where a gully breaks  
Through the cliff-wall, and a fresh stream runs down  
From the high moors behind, and meets the sea.  
There, in the glen, Fensaler stands, the house  
Of Frea, honour'd mother of the Gods, 85  
And shows its lighted windows to the main.

There he went up, and pass'd the open doors ;  
And in the hall he found those women old,  
The prophetesses, who by rite eterne  
On Frea's hearth feed high the sacred fire 9  
Both night and day ; and by the inner wall  
Upon her golden chair the Mother sate,  
With folded hands, revolving things to come.  
To her drew Hoder near, and spake, and said :—  
“ Mother, a child of bale thou bar'st in me ! 9  
For, first, thou barest me with blinded eyes,  
Sightless and helpless, wandering weak in Heaven ;  
And, after that, of ignorant witless mind  
Thou barest me, and unforeseeing soul ;  
That I alone must take the branch from Lok, 10  
The foe, the accuser, whom, though Gods, we hate,  
And cast it at the dear-loved Balder's breast  
At whom the Gods in sport their weapons threw—  
'Gainst that alone had Balder's life no charm.  
Now therefore what to attempt, or whither fly, 10  
For who will bear my hateful sight in Heaven ?  
Can I, O mother, bring them Balder back ?  
Or—for thou know'st the fates, and things allow'd—  
Can I with Hela's power a compact strike,  
And make exchange, and give my life for his ? ” 11  
He spoke : the mother of the Gods replied :—  
“ Hoder, ill-fated, child of bale, my son,  
Sightless in soul and eye, what words are these ?  
That one, long portion'd with his doom of death,  
Should change his lot, and fill another's life, 11  
And Hela yield to this, and let him go !  
On Balder Death hath laid her hand, not thee ;

Nor doth she count this life a price for that.  
For many Gods in Heaven, not thou alone,  
Would freely die to purchase Balder back, 120  
And wend themselves to Hela's gloomy realm.  
For not so gladsome is that life in Heaven  
Which Gods and heroes lead, in feast and fray,  
Waiting the darkness of the final times,  
That one should grudge its loss for Balder's sake, 125  
Balder their joy, so bright, so loved a God.  
But fate withstands, and laws forbid this way.  
Yet in my secret mind one way I know,  
Nor do I judge if it shall win or fail ;  
But much must still be tried, which shall but fail."

And the blind Hoder answer'd her, and said :—  
" What way is this, O mother, that thou show'st ?  
Is it a matter which a God might try ? "

And straight the mother of the Gods replied :—  
" There is a road which leads to Hela's realm, 135  
Untrodden, lonely, far from light and Heaven.  
Who goes that way must take no other horse  
To ride, but Sleipner, Odin's horse, alone.  
Nor must he choose that common path of Gods  
Which every day they come and go in Heaven, 140  
O'er the bridge Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,  
Past Midgard fortress, down to earth and men.  
But he must tread a dark untravell'd road  
Which branches from the north of Heaven, and ride  
Nine days, nine nights, toward the northern ice, 145  
Through valleys deep-engulph'd, with roaring streams.  
And he will reach on the tenth morn a bridge  
Which spans with golden arches Giall's stream,

Not Bifrost, but that bridge a damsel keeps,  
Who tells the passing troops of dead their way 150  
To the low shore of ghosts, and Hela's realm.  
And she will bid him northward steer his course.  
Then he will journey through no lighted land,  
Nor see the sun arise, nor see it set ;  
But he must ever watch the northern Bear, 155  
Who from her frozen height with jealous eye  
Confronts the Dog and Hunter in the south,  
And is alone not dipt in Ocean's stream.  
And straight he will come down to Ocean's strand—  
Ocean, whose watery ring enfolds the world, 160  
And on whose marge the ancient giants dwell.  
But he will reach its unknown northern shore,  
Far, far beyond the outmost giant's home,  
At the chink'd fields of ice, the waste of snow.  
And he must fare across the dismal ice 165  
Northward, until he meets a stretching wall  
Barring his way, and in the wall a grate.  
But then he must dismount, and on the ice  
Tighten the girths of Sleipner, Odin's horse,  
And make him leap the grate, and come within. 170  
And he will see stretch round him Hela's realm,  
The plains of Niflheim, where dwell the dead,  
And hear the roaring of the streams of Hell.  
And he will see the feeble, shadowy tribes,  
And Balder sitting crown'd, and Hela's throne. 175  
Then must he not regard the wailful ghosts  
Who all will flit, like eddying leaves, around ;  
But he must straight accost their solemn queen,  
And pay her homage, and entreat with prayers,

Telling her all that grief they have in Heaven 180  
 For Balder, whom she holds by right below ;  
 If haply he may melt her heart with words,  
 And make her yield, and give him Balder back."

She spoke ; but Hoder answer'd her and said :—  
 " Mother, a dreadful way is this thou show'st ; 185  
 No journey for a sightless God to go !"

And straight the mother of the Gods replied :—  
 " Therefore thyself thou shalt not go, my son.  
 But he whom first thou meetest when thou com'st  
 To Asgard, and declar'st this hidden way, 190  
 Shall go ; and I will be his guide unseen." 200-210

She spoke, and on her face let fall her veil,  
 And bow'd her head, and sate with folded hands,  
 But at the central hearth those women old,  
 Who while the Mother spake had ceased their toil,  
 Began again to heap the sacred fire.  
 And Hoder turn'd, and left his mother's house,  
 Fensaler, whose lit windows look to sea ;  
 And came again down to the roaring waves,  
 And back along the beach to Asgard went, 200  
 Pondering on that which Frea said should be.

But night came down, and darken'd Asgard streets  
 Then from their loathed feasts the Gods arose,  
 And lighted torches, and took up the corpse  
 Of Balder from the floor of Odin's hall, 205  
 And laid it on a bier, and bare him home  
 Through the fast-darkening streets to his own house,  
 Breidablik, on whose columns Balder graved  
 The enchantments that recall the dead to life.  
For wise he was, and many curious arts, 210



Postures of runes, and healing herbs he knew ;  
Unhappy ! but that art he did not know,  
To keep his own life safe, and see the sun.  
There to his hall the Gods brought Balder home,  
And each bespoke him as he laid him down :— 215  
“ Would that ourselves, O Balder, we were borne  
Home to our halls, with torchlight, by our kin,  
So thou might'st live, and still delight the Gods ! ”

They spake ; and each went home to his own house.  
But there was one, the first of all the Gods 220  
For speed, and Hermod was his name in Heaven ;  
Most fleet he was, but now he went the last,  
Heavy in heart for Balder, to his house,  
Which he in Asgard built him, there to dwell,  
Against the harbour, by the city-wall. 225

Him the blind Hoder met, as he came up  
From the sea cityward, and knew his step ;  
Nor yet could Hermod see his brother's face,  
For it grew dark ; but Hoder touch'd his arm.  
And as a spray of honeysuckle flowers 230  
Brushes across a tired traveller's face

Who shuffles through the deep dew-moisten'd dust,  
On a May evening, in the darken'd lanes,  
And starts him, that he thinks a ghost went by—  
So Hoder brush'd by Hermod's side, and said :— 235  
“ Take Sleipner, Hermod, and set forth with dawn  
To Hela's kingdom, to ask Balder back ;  
And they shall be thy guides, who have the power.”

He spake, and brush'd soft by, and disappear'd.  
And Hermod gazed into the night, and said :— 240  
“ Who is it utters through the dark his hest

So quickly, and will wait for no reply ?  
The voice was like the unhappy Hoder's voice.  
Howbeit I will see, and do his hest ;  
For there rang note divine in that command." 245

So speaking, the fleet-footed Hermod came  
Home, and lay down to sleep in his own house ;  
And all the Gods lay down in their own homes.  
And Hoder too came home, distraught with grief,  
Loathing to meet, at dawn, the other Gods ; 250  
And he went in, and shut the door, and fixt  
His sword upright, and fell on it, and died.

But from the hill of Lidskialf Odin rose,  
The throne, from which his eye surveys the world ;  
And mounted Sleipner, and in darkness rode 255  
To Asgard. And the stars came out in heaven,  
High over Asgard, to light home the King.  
But fiercely Odin gallop'd, moved in heart ;  
And swift to Asgard, to the gate, he came.  
And terribly the hoofs of Sleipner rang 260  
Along the flinty floor of Asgard streets,  
And the Gods trembled on their golden beds  
Hearing the wrathful Father coming home—  
For dread, for like a whirlwind, Odin came.  
And to Valhalla's gate he rode, and left 265  
Sleipner ; and Sleipner went to his own stall ;  
And in Valhalla Odin laid him down.

But in Breidablik, Nanna, Balder's wife,  
Came with the Goddesses who wrought her will,  
And stood by Balder lying on his bier. 270  
And at his head and feet she station'd Scalds  
Who in their lives were famous for their song ;

These o'er the corpse intoned a plaintive strain,  
A dirge—and Nanna and her train replied.  
And far into the night they wail'd their dirge. 27  
But when their souls were satisfied with wail,  
They went, and laid them down, and Nanna went  
Into an upper chamber, and lay down ;  
And Frea seal'd her tired lids with sleep.

And 'twas when night is bordering hard on dawn,  
When air is chilliest, and the stars sunk low ;  
Then Balder's spirit through the gloom drew near,  
In garb, in form, in feature as he was,  
Alive ; and still the rays were round his head  
Which were his glorious mark in Heaven ; he stood  
Over against the curtain of the bed,  
And gazed on Nanna as she slept, and spake :—

“ Poor lamb, thou sleepest, and forgett'st thy woe  
Tears stand upon the lashes of thine eyes,  
Tears wet the pillow by thy cheek ; but thou, 290  
Like a young child, hast cried thyself to sleep.  
Sleep on ; I watch thee, and am here to aid.  
Alive I kept not far from thee, dear soul !  
Neither do I neglect thee now, though dead.  
For with to-morrow's dawn the Gods prepare 295  
To gather wood, and build a funeral-pile  
Upon my ship, and burn my corpse with fire,  
That sad, sole honour of the dead ; and thee  
They think to burn, and all my choicest wealth,  
With me, for thus ordains the common rite. 300  
But it shall not be so ; but mild, but swift,  
But painless shall a stroke from Frea come,  
To cut thy thread of life, and free thy soul,

And they shall burn thy corpse with mine, not thee.  
And well I know that by no stroke of death, 305  
Tardy or swift, would'st thou be loath to die,  
So it restored thee, Nanna, to my side,  
Whom thou so well hast loved ; but I can smooth  
Thy way, and this, at least, my prayers avail.  
Yes, and I fain would altogether ward 310  
Death from thy head, and with the Gods in Heaven  
Prolong thy life, though not by thee desired—  
But right bars this, not only thy desire.  
Yet dreary, Nanna, is the life they lead  
In that dim world, in Hela's mouldering realm ; 315  
And doleful are the ghosts, the troops of dead,  
Whom Hela with austere control presides.  
For of the race of Gods is no one there,  
Save me alone, and Hela, solemn queen ;  
And all the nobler souls of mortal men 320  
On battle-field have met their death, and now  
Feast in Valhalla, in my father's hall ;  
Only the inglorious sort are there below,  
The old, the cowards, and the weak are there—  
Men spent by sickness, or obscure decay. 325  
But even there, O Nanna, we might find  
Some solace in each other's look and speech,  
Wandering together through that gloomy world,  
And talking of the life we led in Heaven,  
While we yet lived, among the other Gods." 330  
He spake, and straight his lineaments began  
To fade ; and Nanna in her sleep stretch'd out  
Her arms towards him with a cry—but he  
Mournfully shook his head, and disappear'd.

And as the woodman sees a little smoke 335  
 Hang in the air, afield, and disappear,  
 So Balder faded in the night away.  
 And Nanna on her bed sank back ; but then  
 Frea, the mother of the Gods, with stroke  
 Painless and swift, set free her airy soul, 340  
 Which took, on Balder's track, the way below ;  
 And instantly the sacred morn appear'd. 2. 11-16.

## II. JOURNEY TO THE DEAD

FORTH from the east, up the ascent of Heaven,  
 Day drove his courser with the shining mane ;  
 And in Valhalla, from his gable-perch,  
 The golden-crested cock began to crow.  
 Hereafter, in the blackest dead of night, 5  
 With shrill and dismal cries that bird shall crow,  
 Warning the Gods that foes draw nigh to Heaven ;  
 But now he crew at dawn, a cheerful note,  
 To wake the Gods and Heroes to their tasks.  
 And all the Gods, and all the Heroes, woke. 10  
 And from their beds the Heroes rose, and donn'd  
 Their arms, and led their horses from the stall,  
 And mounted them, and in Valhalla's court  
 Were ranged ; and then the daily fray began.  
 And all day long they there are hack'd and hewn, 15  
 'Mid dust, and groans, and limbs lopp'd off, and blood ;  
 But all at night return to Odin's hall,  
 Woundless and fresh ; such lot is theirs in Heaven.  
 And the Valkyries on their steeds went forth  
 Tow'rd earth and fights of men ; and at their side 20  
 Skulda, the youngest of the Nornies, rode ;

And over Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,  
Past Midgard fortress, down to earth they came ;  
There through some battle-field, where men fall fast,  
Their horses fetlock-deep in blood, they ride, 25  
And pick the bravest warriors out for death,  
Whom they bring back with them at night to Heaven  
To glad the Gods, and feast in Odin's hall.

But the Gods went not now, as otherwhile,  
Into the tilt-yard, where the Heroes fought, 30  
To feast their eyes with looking on the fray ;  
Nor did they to their judgment-place repair  
By the ash Igdrasil, in Ida's plain,  
Where they hold council, and give laws for men.  
But they went, Odin first, the rest behind, 35  
To the hall Gladheim, which is built of gold ;  
Where are in circle ranged twelve golden chairs,  
And in the midst one higher, Odin's throne.  
There all the Gods in silence sate them down ;  
And thus the Father of the ages spake :— 40

"Go quickly, Gods, bring wood to the seashore,  
With all, which it beseems the dead to have,  
And make a funeral-pile on Balder's ship ;  
On the twelfth day the Gods shall burn his corpse.  
But Hermod, thou, take Sleipner and ride down 45  
To Hela's kingdom to ask Balder back."

So said he ; and the Gods arose, and took  
Axes and ropes, and at their head came Thor,  
Shouldering his hammer, which the giants know.  
Forth wended they, and drave their steeds before. 50  
And up the dewy mountain-tracks they fared  
To the dark forests, in the early dawn ;

And up and down, and side and slant they roam'd.  
And from the glens all day an echo came  
Of crashing falls; for with his hammer Thor 5.  
Smote 'mid the rocks the lichen-bearded pines,  
And burst their roots, while to their tops the Gods  
Mane fast the woven ropes, and haled them down,  
And lopp'd their boughs, and clove them on the sward  
And bound the logs behind their steeds to draw, 6.  
And drave them homeward; and the snorting steed  
Went straining through the crackling brushwood down  
And by the darkling forest-paths the Gods  
Follow'd, and on their shoulders carried boughs.  
And they came out upon the plain, and pass'd 6.  
Asgard, and led their horses to the beach,  
And loosed them of their loads on the seashore,  
And ranged the wood in stacks by Balder's ship;  
And every God went home to his own house.

But when the Gods were to the forest gone, 7.  
Hermod led Sleipner from Valhalla forth  
And saddled him; before that, Sleipner brook'd  
No meaner hand than Odin's on his mane,  
On his broad back no lesser rider bore;  
Yet docile now he stood at Hermod's side, 75  
Arching his neck, and glad to be bestrode,  
Knowing the God they went to seek, how dear.  
But Hermod mounted him, and sadly fared  
In silence up the dark untravell'd road  
Which branches from the north of Heaven, and went  
All day; and daylight waned, and night came on.  
And all that night he rode, and journey'd so,  
Nine days, nine nights, toward the northern ice,

Through valleys deep-engulph'd, by roaring streams.  
 And on the tenth morn he beheld the bridge 85  
 Which spans with golden arches Giall's stream,  
 And on the bridge a damsel watching arm'd,  
 In the strait passage, at the farther end,  
 Where the road issues between walling rocks.  
 Scant space that warder left for passers by ;— 90  
 But as when cowherds in October drive  
 Their kine across a snowy mountain-pass  
 To winter-pasture on the southern side, *Sund*  
 And on the ridge a waggon chokes the way, \*  
 Wedged in the snow ; then painfully the hinds 95  
 With goad and shouting urge their cattle past,  
 Plunging through deep untrodden banks of snow  
 To right and left, and warm steam fills the air—  
 So on the bridge that damsel block'd the way,  
 And question'd Hermod as he came, and said :—100  
 “ Who art thou on thy black and fiery horse  
 Under whose hoofs the bridge o'er Giall's stream  
 Rumbles and shakes ? Tell me thy race and home.  
 But yestermorn, five troops of dead pass'd by,  
 Bound on their way below to Hela's realm, 105  
 Nor shook the bridge so much as thou alone.  
 And thou hast flesh and colour on thy cheeks,  
 Like men who live, and draw the vital air ;  
 Nor look'st thou pale and wan, like men deceased,  
 Souls bound below, my daily passers here.” 110  
 And the fleet-footed Hermod answer'd her :—  
 “ O damsel, Hermod am I call'd, the son  
 Of Odin ; and my high-roof'd house is built  
 Far hence, in Asgard, in the city of Gods ;



And Sleipner, Odin's horse, is this I ride. 115  
And I come, sent this road on Balder's track ;  
Say then, if he hath cross'd thy bridge or no?"

He spake ; the warder of the bridge replied :—  
" O Hermod, rarely do the feet of Gods  
Or of the horses of the Gods resound 120  
Upon my bridge ; and, when they cross, I know.  
Balder hath gone this way, and ta'en the road  
Below there, to the north, tow'rd Hela's realm.  
From here the cold white mist can be discern'd,  
Nor lit with sun, but through the darksome air 125  
By the dim vapour-blotted light of stars,  
Which hangs over the ice where lies the road.  
For in that ice are lost those northern streams,  
Freezing and ridging in their onward flow,  
Which from the fountain of Vergelmer run, 130  
The spring that bubbles up by Hela's throne.  
There are the joyless seats, the haunt of ghosts,  
Hela's pale swarms ; and there was Balder bound.  
Ride on ! pass free ! but he by this is there."

She spake, and stepp'd aside, and left him room. 135  
And Hermod greeted her, and gallop'd by  
Across the bridge ; then she took post again.  
But northward Hermod rode, the way below ;  
And o'er a darksome tract, which knows no sun,  
But by the blotted light of stars, he fared. 140  
And he came down to Ocean's northern strand,  
At the drear ice, beyond the giants' home.  
Thence on he journey'd o'er the fields of ice  
Still north, until he met a stretching wall  
Barring his way, and in the wall a grate. 145

Then he dismounted, and drew tight the girths,  
 On the smooth ice, of Sleipner, Odin's horse,  
 And made him leap the grate, and came within.  
 And he beheld spread round him Hela's realm,  
 The plains of Niflheim, where dwell the dead, 150  
 And heard the thunder of the streams of Hell.  
 For near the wall the river of Roaring flows,  
 Outmost ; the others near the centre run—  
 The Storm, the Abyss, the Howling, and the Pain ;  
 These flow by Hela's throne, and near their spring. 155  
 And from the dark flock'd up the shadowy tribes ;—  
 And as the swallows crowd the bulrush-beds  
 Of some clear river, issuing from a lake,  
 On autumn-days, before they cross the sea  
 And to each bulrush-crest a swallow hangs 160  
 Quivering, and others skim the river-streams,  
 And their quick twittering fills the banks and shores—  
 So around Hermod swarm'd the twittering ghosts.  
 Women, and infants, and young men who died  
 Too soon for fame, with white ungraven shields ; 165  
 And old men, known to glory, but their star  
 Betray'd them, and of wasting age they died,  
 Not wounds ; yet, dying, they their armour wore,  
 And now have chief regard in Hela's realm.  
 Behind flock'd wrangling up a piteous crew, 170  
 Greeted of none, disfeatured and forlorn—  
 Cowards, who were in sloughs interr'd alive ;  
 And round them still the wattled hurdles hung,  
 Wherewith they stamp'd them down, and trod them  
 deep,  
 To hide their shameful memory from men. 175

But all he pass'd unhail'd, and reach'd the throne  
 Of Hela, and saw, near it, Balder crown'd,  
 And Hela set thereon, with countenance stern  
 And thus bespake him first the solemn queen :—

“ Unhappy, how hast thou endured to leave 180  
 The light, and journey to the cheerless land  
 Where idly flit about the feeble shades?  
 How didst thou cross the bridge o'er Giall's stream,  
 Being alive, and come to Ocean's shore?  
 Or how o'erleap the grate that bars the wall?” 185

She spake: but down off Sleipner Hermod sprang,  
 And fell before her feet, and clasp'd her knees;  
 And spake, and mild entreated her, and said :—

“ O Hela, wherefore should the Gods declare  
 Their errands to each other, or the ways 190  
 They go? the errand and the way is known.  
 Thou know'st, thou know'st, what grief we have in  
 Heaven

For Balder, whom thou hold'st by right below.  
 Restore him! for what part fulfils he here?  
 Shall he shed cheer over the cheerless seats, 195  
 And touch the apathetic ghosts with joy?  
 Not for such end, O queen, thou hold'st thy realm.  
 For Heaven was Balder born, the city of Gods  
 And Heroes, where they live in light and joy.  
 Thither restore him, for his place is there!” 200

He spoke; and grave replied the solemn queen :—  
 “ Hermod, for he thou art, thou son of Heaven!  
 A strange unlikely errand, sure, is thine.  
 Do the Gods send to me to make them blest?  
 Small bliss my race hath of the Gods obtained. 205

Three mighty children to my father Lok  
Did Angerbode, the giantess, bring forth—  
Fenris the wolf, the Serpent huge, and me.  
Of these the Serpent in the sea ye cast,  
Who since in your despite hath wax'd amain, 210  
And now with gleaming ring enfolds the world ;  
Me on this cheerless nether world ye threw,  
And gave me nine unlighted realms to rule ;  
While on his island in the lake afar,  
Made fast to the bored crag, by wile not strength 215  
Subdued, with limber chains lives Fenris bound.  
Lok still subsists in Heaven, our father wise,  
Your mate, though loathed, and feasts in Odin's hall ;  
But him too foes await, and netted snares,  
And in a cave a bed of needle-rocks, 220  
And o'er his visage serpents dropping gall.  
Yet he shall one day rise, and burst his bonds,  
And with himself set us his offspring free,  
When he guides Muspel's children to their bourne.  
Till then in peril or in pain we live, 225  
Wrought by the Gods—and ask the Gods our aid ?  
Howbeit, we abide our day ; till then,  
We do not as some feebler haters do—  
Seek to afflict our foes with petty pangs,  
Helpless to better us, or ruin them. 230  
Come then ! if Balder was so dear beloved,  
And this is true, and such a loss is Heaven's—  
Hear, how to Heaven may Balder be restored.  
Show me through all the world the signs of grief !  
Fails but one thing to grieve, here Balder stops ! 235  
Let all that lives and moves upon the earth

Weep him, and all that is without life weep ;  
Let Gods, men, brutes, bewEEP him ; plants and  
stones !

So shall I know the lost was dear indeed,  
And bend my heart, and give him back to Heaven."

She spake ; and Hermod answer'd her, and said :—  
" Hela, such as thou say'st, the terms shall be.  
But come, declare me this, and truly tell :  
May I, ere I depart, bid Balder hail,  
Or is it here withheld to greet the dead ? " 245

He spake, and straightway Hela answered him :—  
" Hermod, greet Balder if thou wilt, and hold  
Converse ; his speech remains, though he be dead."

And straight to Balder Hermod turn'd, and spake:—  
" Even in the abode of death, O Balder, hail ! 250  
Thou hear'st, if hearing, like as speech, is thine,  
The terms of thy releasement hence to Heaven ;  
Fear nothing but that all shall be fulfill'd.

For not unmindful of thee are the Gods,  
Who see the light, and blest in Asgard dwell ; 255  
Even here they seek thee out, in Hela's realm.  
And sure of all the happiest far art thou  
Who ever have been known in earth or Heaven ;  
Alive, thou wast of Gods the most beloved,  
And now thou sittest crown'd by Hela's side, 260  
Here, and hast honour among all the dead."

He spake ; and Balder utter'd him reply,  
But feebly, as a voice far off ; he said :—

" Hermod the nimble, gild me not my death ! 26  
Better to live a serf, a captured man,  
Who scatters rushes in a master's hall,

Than be a crown'd king here, and rule the dead.  
And now I count not of these terms as safe  
To be fulfill'd, nor my return as sure,  
Though I be loved, and many mourn my death ; 270  
For double-minded ever was the seed  
Of Lok, and double are the gifts they give.  
Howbeit, report thy message ; and therewith,  
To Odin, to my father, take this ring,  
Memorial of me, whether saved or no ; 275  
And tell the Heaven-born Gods how thou hast seen  
Me sitting here below by Hela's side,  
Crown'd, having honour among all the dead."

He spake, and raised his hand, and gave the ring.  
And with inscrutable regard the queen 280  
Of Hell beheld them, and the ghosts stood dumb.  
But Hermod took the ring, and yet once more  
Kneel'd and did homage to the solemn queen ;  
Then mounted Sleipner, and set forth to ride  
Back, through the astonish'd tribes of dead, to Heaven.  
And to the wall he came, and found the grate  
Lifted, and issued on the fields of ice.  
And o'er the ice he far'd to Ocean's strand,  
And up from thence, a wet and misty road,  
To the arm'd damsel's bridge, and Giall's stream. 290  
Worse was that way to go than to return,  
For him ;—for others all return is barr'd.  
Nine days he took to go, two to return,  
And on the twelfth morn saw the light of Heaven.  
And as a traveller in the early dawn 295  
To the steep edge of some great valley comes,  
Through which a river flows, and sees, beneath,

Clouds of white rolling vapours fill the vale,  
 But o'er them, on the farther slope, describes  
 Vineyards, and crofts, and pastures, bright with sun—  
 So Hermod, o'er the fog between, saw Heaven.  
 And Sleipner snorted, for the smelt the air  
 Of Heaven; and mightily, as wing'd, he flew.  
 And Hermod saw the towers of Asgard rise;  
 And he drew near, and heard no living voice 305  
 In Asgard; and the golden halls were dumb.  
 Then Hermod knew what labour held the Gods;  
 And through the empty streets he rode, and pass'd  
 Under the gate-house to the sands, and found  
 The Gods on the sea-shore by Balder's ship 310

### III. FUNERAL.

THE Gods held talk together, group'd in knots,  
 Round Balder's corpse, which they had thither borne  
 And Hermod came down tow'rds them from the gate  
 And Lok, the father of the serpent, first  
 Beheld him come, and to his neighbour spake:—

“ See, here is Hermod, who comes single back  
 From Hell; and shall I tell thee how he seems?  
 Like as a farmer, who hath lost his dog,  
 Some morn, at market, in a crowded town—  
 Through many streets the poor beast runs in vain, 10  
 And follows this man after that, for hours;  
 And, late at evening, spent and panting, falls  
 Before a stranger's threshold, not his home,  
 With flanks a-tremble, and his slender tongue  
 Hangs quivering out between his dust-smear'd jaws,  
 And piteously he eyes the passers by;

But home his master comes to his own farm,  
Far in the country, wondering where he is—  
So Hermod comes to-day unfollow'd home."

And straight his neighbour, moved with wrath,  
replied :—

20

" Deceiver ! fair in form, but false in heart !

Enemy, mocker, whom, though Gods, we hate—

Peace, lest our father Odin hear thee gibe !

Would I might see him snatch thee in his hand,

And bind thy carcase, like a bale, with cords, 25

And hurl thee in a lake, to sink or swim !

If clear from plotting Balder's death, to swim ;

But deep, if thou devisedst it, to drown,

And perish, against fate, before thy day."

So they two soft to one another spake. 30

But Odin look'd toward the land, and saw

His messenger ; and he stood forth, and cried.

And Hermod came, and leapt from Sleipner down,

And in his father's hand put Sleipner's rein,

And greeted Odin and the Gods, and said :— 35

" Odin, my father, and ye, Gods of Heaven !

Lo, home, having perform'd your will, I come.

Into the joyless kingdom have I been,

Below, and look'd upon the shadowy tribes

Of ghosts, and communed with their solemn queen ;

And to your prayer she sends you this reply :

*Show her through all the world the signs of grief !*

*Fails but one thing to grieve, there Balder stops !*

*Let Gods, men, brutes, bewEEP him ; plants and stones :*

*So shall she know your loss was dear indeed 45*

*And bend her heart, and give you Balder back."*



He spoke ; and all the Gods to Odin look'd ;  
And straight the Father of the ages said :—

“ Ye Gods, these terms may keep another day.  
But now, put on your arms, and mount your steeds,  
And in procession all come near, and weep  
Balder ; for that is what the dead desire.  
When ye enough have wept, then build a pile  
Of the heap'd wood, and burn his corpse with fire  
Out of the sight ; that we may turn from grief,      55  
And lead, as erst, our daily life in Heaven.”

He spoke, and the Gods arm'd ; and Odin donn'd  
His dazzling corslet and his helm of gold,  
And led the way on Sleipner ; and the rest  
Follow'd, in tears, their father and their king.      60  
And thrice in arms around the dead they rode,  
Weeping ; the sands were wetted, and their arms,  
With their thick-falling tears—so good a friend  
They mourn'd that day, so bright, so loved a God.  
And Odin came, and laid his kingly hands      65  
On Balder's breast, and thus began the wail :—

“ Farewell, O Balder, bright and loved, my son !  
In that great day, the twilight of the Gods,  
When Muspel's children shall beleaguer Heaven,  
Then we shall miss thy counsel and thy arm.”      70

Thou camest near the next, O warrior Thor !  
Shouldering thy hammer, in thy chariot drawn,  
Swaying the long-hair'd goats with silver'd rein ;  
And over Balder's corpse these words didst say :—

“ Brother, thou dwellest in the darksome land,      75  
And talkest with the feeble tribes of ghosts,  
Now, and I know not how they prize thee there—

But here, I know, thou wilt be miss'd and mourn'd.  
 For haughty spirits and high wraths are rife  
 Among the Gods and Heroes here in Heaven, 80  
 As among those whose joy and work is war;  
 And daily strifes arise, and angry words.  
 But from thy lips, O Balder, night or day,  
 Heard no one ever an injurious word  
 To God or Hero, but thou keptest back 85  
 The others, labouring to compose their brawls.  
 Be ye then kind, as Balder too was kind !  
 For we lose him, who smoothed all strife in Heaven."

He spake, and all the Gods assenting wail'd.  
 And Freya next came nigh, with golden tears; 90  
 The loveliest Goddess she in Heaven, by all  
 Most honour'd after Frea, Odin's wife.  
 Her long ago the wandering Oder took  
 To mate, but left her to roam distant lands;  
 Since then she seeks him, and weeps tears of gold. 95  
 Names hath she many; Vanadis on earth.  
 They call her, Freya is her name in Heaven;  
 She in her hands took Balder's head, and spake:—

" Balder, my brother, thou art gone a road  
 Unknown and long, and haply on that way 100  
 My long-lost wandering Oder thou hast met,  
 For in the paths of Heaven he is not found.  
 Oh, if it be so, tell him what thou wast  
 To his neglected wife, and what he is,  
 And wring his heart with shame, to hear thy word !  
 For he, my husband, left me here to pine,  
 Not long a wife, when his unquiet heart  
 First drove him from me into distant lands;

Since then I vainly seek him through the world,  
And weep from shore to shore my golden tears, 110  
But neither god nor mortal heeds my pain.  
Thou only, Balder, wast for ever kind,  
To take my hand, and wipe my tears, and say:  
*Weep not, O Freya, weep no golden tears !*  
*One day the wandering Oder will return,* 115  
*Or thou wilt find him in thy faithful search*  
*On some great road, or resting in an inn,*  
*Or at a ford, or sleeping by a tree.*  
So Balder said ;— but Oder, well I know,  
My truant Oder I shall see no more 120  
To the world's end ; and Balder now is gone,  
And I am left uncomforted in Heaven."

She spake ; and all the Goddesses bewail'd,  
Last from among the Heroes one came near,  
No God, but of the hero-troop the chief— 125  
Regner, who swept the northern sea with fleets,  
And ruled o'er Denmark and the heathy isles,  
Living ; but Ella captured him and slew ;—  
A king whose fame then fill'd the vast of Heaven,  
Now time obscures it, and men's later deeds. 130  
He last approach'd the corpse, and spake, and said:—  
" Balder, there yet are many Scalds in Heaven  
Still left, and that chief Scald, thy brother Brage,  
Whom we may bid to sing, though thou art gone.  
And all these gladly, while we drink, we hear, 135  
After the feast is done, in Odin's hall ;  
But they harp ever on one string, and wake  
Remembrance in our soul of wars alone,  
Such as on earth we valiantly have waged,

And blood, and ringing blows, and violent death. 140  
But when thou sangest, Balder, thou didst strike  
Another note, and, like a bird in spring,  
Thy voice of joyance minded us, and youth,  
And wife, and children, and our ancient home.  
Yes, and I, too, remember'd then no more 145  
My dungeon, where the serpents stung me dead,  
Nor Ella's victory on the English coast—  
But I heard Thora laugh in Gothland Isle,  
And saw my shepherdess, Aslauga, tend  
Her flock along the white Norwegian beach. 150  
Tears started to mine eyes with yearning joy  
Therefore with grateful heart I mourn thee dead."

So Regner spake, and all the Heroes groan'd.  
But now the sun had pass'd the height of Heaven,  
And soon had all that day been spent in wail ; 155  
But then the Father of the ages said :—

"Ye Gods, there well may be too much of wail !  
Bring now the gather'd wood to Balder's ship ;  
Heap on the deck the logs, and build the pyre."

But when the Gods and Heroes heard, they brought  
The wood to Balder's ship, and built a pile,  
Full the deck's breadth, and lofty ; then the corpse  
Of Balder on the highest top they laid,  
With Nanna on his right, and on his left  
Hoder, his brother, whom his own hand slew. 165  
And they set jars of wine and oil to lean  
Against the bodies, and stuck torches near,  
Splinters of pine-wood, soak'd with turpentine ;  
And brought his arms and gold, and all his stuff,  
And slew the dogs who at his table fed, 170

And his horse, Balder's horse, whom most he loved,  
And placed them on the pyre, and Odin threw  
A last choice gift thereon, his golden ring.  
The mast they fixt, and hoisted up the sails,  
Then they put fire to the wood ; and Thor 175  
Set his stout shoulder hard against the stern  
To push the ship through the thick sand;—sparks flew  
From the deep trench she plough'd, so strong a God  
Furrow'd it ; and the water gurgled in.  
And the ship floated on the waves, and rock'd. 180  
But in the hills a strong east-wind arose,  
And came down moaning to the sea ; first squalls  
Ran black o'er the sea's face, then steady rush'd  
The breeze, and fill'd the sails, and blew the fire.  
And wreathed in smoke the ship stood out to sea. 185  
Soon with a roaring rose the mighty fire,  
And the pile crackled ; and between the logs  
Sharp quivering tongues of flame shot out, and leapt,  
Curling and darting, higher, until they lick'd  
The summit of the pile, the dead, the mast, 190  
And ate the shrivelling sails ; but still the ship  
Drove on, ablaze above her hull with fire.  
And the Gods stood upon the beach, and gazed.  
And while they gazed, the sun went lurid down  
Into the smoke-wrapt sea, and night came on. 195  
Then the wind fell, with night, and there was calm ;  
But through the dark they watch'd the burning ship  
Still carried o'er the distant waters on,  
Farther and farther, like an eye of fire.  
And long, in the far dark, blazed Balder's pile ; 200  
But fainter, as the stars rose high, it flared,

The bodies were consumed, ash choked the pile.  
 And as, in a decaying winter-fire,  
 A charr'd log, falling, makes a shower of sparks—  
 So with a shower of sparks the pile fell in, 205  
 Reddening the sea around ; and all was dark.

But the Gods went by starlight up the shore  
 To Asgard, and sate down in Odin's hall  
 At table, and the funeral-feast began.  
 All night they ate the boar Serimner's flesh, 210  
 And from their horns, with silver rimm'd, drank  
 mead,  
 Silent, and waited for the sacred morn.

And morning over all the world was spread.  
 Then from their loathed feasts the Gods arose,  
 And took their horses, and set forth to ride 215  
 O'er the bridge Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,  
 To the ash Igdrasil, and Ida's plain ;  
 Thor came on foot, the rest on horseback rode.  
 And they found Mimir sitting by his fount  
 Of wisdom, which beneath the ashtree springs ; 220  
 And saw the Nornies watering the roots  
 Of that world-shadowing tree with honey-dew.  
 There came the Gods, and sate them down on  
 stones ;

And thus the Father of the ages said :—

“ Ye Gods, the terms ye know, which Hermod  
 brought. 225

Accept them or reject them ! both have grounds.  
 Accept them, and they bind us, unfulfill'd,  
 To leave for ever Balder in the grave,  
 An unrecover'd prisoner, shade with shades.

But how, ye say, should the fulfilment fail ?— 2  
 Smooth sound the terms, and light to be fulfill'd ;  
 For dear-beloved was Balder while he lived  
 In Heaven and earth, and who would grudge h  
 tear

But from the traitorous seed of Lok they come,  
 These terms, and I suspect some hidden fraud. 2  
 Bethink ye, Gods, is there no other way ?—  
 Speak, were not this a way, the way for Gods ?  
 If I, if Odin, clad in radiant arms,  
 Mounted on Sleipner, with the warrior Thor  
 Drawn in his car beside me, and my sons, 2  
 All the strong brood of Heaven, to swell my train,  
 Should make irruption into Hela's realm,  
 And set the fields of gloom ablaze with light,  
 And bring in triumph Balder back to Heaven ? ”

He spake, and his fierce sons applauded loud. 2  
 But Freia, mother of the Gods, arose,  
 Daughter and wife of Odin ; thus she said :—  
 “ Odin, thou whirlwind, what a threat is this !  
 Thou threatenest what transcends thy might, eve  
 thir

For of all powers the mightiest far art thou, 2!  
 Lord over men on earth, and Gods in Heaven ;  
 Yet even from thee thyself hath been withheld  
 One thing—to undo what thou thyself hast ruled.  
 For all which hath been fixt, was fixt by thee.  
 In the beginning, ere the Gods were born, 2!  
 Before the Heavens were builded, thou didst slay  
 The giant Ymir, whom the abyss brought forth,  
 Thou and thy brethren fierce, the sons of Bor,

And cast his trunk to choke the abysmal void.  
But of his flesh and members thou didst build 260  
The earth and Ocean, and above them Heaven.  
And from the flaming world, where Muspel reigns,  
Thou sent'st and fetched'st fire, and madest lights,  
Sun, moon, and stars, which thou hast hung in Heaven,  
Dividing clear the paths of night and day. 265  
And Asgard thou didst build, and Midgard fort;  
Then me thou mad'st ; of us the Gods were born.  
Last, walking by the sea, thou foundest spars  
Of wood, and framed'st men, who till the earth,  
Or on the sea, the field of pirates, sail. 270  
And all the race of Ymir thou didst drown,  
Save one, Bergelmer ;—he on shipboard fled  
Thy deluge, and from him the giants sprang  
But all that brood thou hast removed far off,  
And set by Ocean's utmost marge to dwell ; 275  
But Hela into Niflheim thou threw'st,  
And gav'st her nine unlighted worlds to rule,  
A queen, and empire over all the dead.  
That empire wilt thou now invade, light up  
Her darkness, from her grasp a subject tear ?— 280  
Try it ; but I, for one, will not applaud.  
Nor do I merit, Odin, thou should'st slight  
Me and my words, though thou be first in Heaven ;  
For I too am a Goddess, born of thee,  
Thine eldest, and of me the Gods are sprung; 285  
And all that is to come I know, but lock  
In mine own breast, and have to none reveal'd.  
Come then ! since Hela holds by right her prey,  
But offers terms for his release to Heaven,



Accept the chance ; thou canst no more obtain. 29  
Send through the world thy messengers ; entreat  
All living and unliving things to weep  
For Balder ; if thou haply thus may'st melt  
Hela, and win the loved one back to Heaven."

She spake, and on her face let fall her veil, 29  
And bow'd her head, and sate with folded hands.  
Nor did the all-ruling Odin slight her word ;  
Straightway he spake, and thus address'd the Gods  
"Go quickly forth through all the world, and pra  
All living and unliving things to weep 30  
Balder, if haply he may thus be won."

When the Gods heard, they straight arose, and too  
Their horses, and rode forth through all the world ;  
North, south, east, west, they struck, and roam'd th  
world

Entreating all things to weep Balder's death. 30  
And all that lived, and all without life, wept.  
And as in winter, when the frost breaks up,  
At winter's end before the spring begins,  
And a warm west-wind blows, and thaw sets in—  
After an hour a dripping sound is heard 31  
In all the forests, and the soft-strewn snow  
Under the trees is dibbled thick with holes,  
And from the boughs the snowloads shuffle down ;  
And, in fields sloping to the south, dark plots  
Of grass peep out amid surrounding snow, 31  
And widen, and the peasant's heart is glad—  
So through the world was heard a dripping noise  
Of all things weeping to bring Balder back ;  
And there fell joy upon the Gods to hear.

But Hermod rode with Niord, whom he took 320  
 To show him spits and beaches of the sea  
 Far off, where some unwarn'd might fail to weep—  
 Niord, the God of storms, whom fishers know ;  
 Not born in Heaven ; he was in Vanheim rear'd,  
 With men, but lives a hostage with the Gods ; 325  
 He knows each frith, and every rocky creek  
 Fringed with dark pines, and sands where seafowl  
 scream —

They two scour'd every coast, and all things wept.  
 And they rode home together, through the wood  
 Of Jarnvid, which to east of Midgard lies 330  
 Bordering the giants, where the trees are iron ;  
 There in the wood before a cave they came,  
 Where sate, in the cave's mouth, a skinny hag,  
 Toothless and old ; she gibes the passers by.  
 Thok is she call'd, but now Lok wore her shape ; 335  
 She greeted them the first, and laugh'd, and said :—

“ Ye Gods, good lack, is it so dull in Heaven,  
 That ye come pleasuring to Thok's iron wood ?  
 Lovers of change ye are, fastidious sprites. *dandy*  
 Look, as in some boor's yard a sweet-breath'd cow, 340  
 Whose manger is stuff'd full of good fresh hay,  
 Snuffs at it daintily, and stoops her head  
 To chew the straw, her litter, at her feet—  
 So ye grow squeamish, Gods, and sniff at Heaven ; ”

She spake ; but Hermod answer'd her and said :—  
 “ Thok, not for gibes we come, we come for tears. 346  
 Balder is dead, and Hela holds her prey,  
 But will restore, if all things give him tears.  
 Begrudge not thine ! to all was Balder dear.”

Then, with a louder laugh, the hag replied :— 350  
“ Is Balder dead ? and do ye come for tears ?  
Thok with dry eyes will weep o’er Balder’s pyre.  
Weep him all other things, if weep they will—  
I weep him not ! let Hela keep her prey.”

She spake, and to the cavern’s depth she fled, 355  
Mocking ; and Hermod knew their toil was vain.  
And as seafaring men, who long have wrought  
In the great deep for gain, at last come home,  
And towards evening see the headlands rise  
Of their dear country, and can plain descry 360  
A fire of wither’d furze which boys have lit  
Upon the cliffs, or smoke of burning weeds  
Out of a till’d field inland ;—then the wind  
Catches them, and drives out again to sea ;  
And they go long days tossing up and down 365  
Over the grey sea-ridges, and the glimpse  
Of port they had makes bitterer far their toil—  
So the Gods’ cross was bitterer for their joy.

Then, sad at heart, to Niord Hermod spake :—  
“ It is the accuser Lok, who flouts us all ! 370  
Ride back, and tell in Heaven this heavy news ;  
I must again below, to Hela’s realm.”

He spoke ; and Niord set forth back to Heaven.  
But northward Hermod rode, the way below,  
The way he knew ; and traversed Giall’s stream, 375  
And down to Ocean groped, and cross’d the ice,  
And came beneath the wall, and found the grate  
Still lifted ; well was his return foreknown.  
And once more Hermod saw around him spread  
The joyless plains, and heard the streams of Hell. 380

But as he enter'd, on the extremest bound  
Of Niflheim, he saw one ghost come near,  
Hovering, and stopping oft, as if afraid—  
Höder, the unhappy, whom his own hand slew.  
And Hermod look'd, and knew his brother's ghost, 385  
And call'd him by his name, and sternly said :—  
“ Hoder, ill-fated, blind in heart and eyes !

Why tarriest thou to plunge thee in the gulph  
Of the deep inner gloom, but fittest here,  
In twilight, on the lonely verge of Hell, 390  
Far from the other ghosts, and Hela's throne ?  
Doubtless thou fearest to meet Balder's voice,  
Thy brother, whom through folly thou didst slay.”

He spoke ; but Hoder answer'd him, and said :—  
“ Hermod the nimble, dost thou still pursue 395  
The unhappy with reproach, even in the grave ?

For this I died, and fled beneath the gloom,  
Not daily to endure abhorring Gods,  
Nor with a hateful presence cumber Heaven ;  
And canst thou not, even here, pass pitying by ? 400  
No less than Balder have I lost the light  
Of Heaven, and communion with my kin ;

I too had once a wife, and once a child,  
And substance, and a golden house in Heaven—  
But all I left of my own act and fled 405  
Below, and dost thou hate me even here ?

Balder upbraids me not, nor hates at all,  
Though he has cause, have any cause ; but he,  
When that with downcast looks I hither came,  
Stretch'd forth his hand, and with benignant voice, 410  
*Welcome, he said, if there be welcome here,*

*Brother and fellow-sport of Lok with me!*

And not to offend thee, Hermod, nor to force  
My hated converse on thee, came I up  
From the deep gloom, where I will now return ;  
But earnestly I long'd to hover near,  
Not too far off, when that thou camest by ;  
To feel the presence of a brother God,  
And hear the passage of a horse of Heaven,  
For the last time—for here thou com'st no more."

He spake, and turn'd to go to the inner gloom  
But Hermod stay'd him with mild words, and said  
"Thou doest well to chide me, Hoder blind!  
Truly thou say'st, the planning guilty mind  
Was Lok's ; the unwitting hand alone was thine,  
But Gods are like the sons of men in this—  
When they have woe, they blame the nearest cause  
Howbeit stay, and be appeased ! and tell :  
Sits Balder still in pomp by Hela's side,  
Or is he mingled with the unnumber'd dead ?"

Make toward them o'er the stretching cloudy plain.  
And Hermod straight perceived them, who they were  
Balder and Nanna ; and to Balder said :— 445

“ Balder, too truly thou foresaw'st a snare !  
Lok triumphs still, and Hela keeps her prey.  
No more to Asgard shalt thou come, nor lodge  
In thy own house, Breidablik, nor enjoy  
The love all bear toward thee, nor train up 450  
Forset, thy son, to be beloved like thee.

Here must thou lie, and wait an endless age.  
Therefore for the last time, O Balder, hail ! ”

He spake ; and Balder answer'd him and said :—  
“ Hail and farewell ! for here thou com'st no more. 455

Yet mourn not for me, Hermod, when thou sitt'st  
In Heaven, nor let the other Gods lament,  
As wholly to be pitied, quite forlorn.  
For Nanna hath rejoin'd me, who, of old,  
In Heaven, was seldom parted from my side ; 460  
And still the acceptance follows me, which crown'd  
My former life, and cheers me even here.  
The iron frown of Hela is relax'd

When I draw nigh, and the wan tribes of dead  
Love me, and gladly bring for my award 465  
Their ineffectual feuds and feeble hates—  
Shadows of hates, but they distress them still.”

And the fleet-footed Hermod made reply :—  
“ Thou hast then all the solace death allows, 470  
Esteem and function ; and so far is well.  
Yet here thou liest, Balder, underground,  
Rusting for ever ; and the years roll on,  
The generations pass, the ages grow,

And bring us nearer to the final day  
When from the south shall march the fiery band 47  
And cross the bridge of Heaven, with Lok for guid  
And Fenris at his heel with broken chain ;  
While from the east the giant Rymer steers  
His ship, and the great serpent makes to land ;  
And all are marshall'd in one flaming square 48  
Against the Gods, upon the plains of Heaven,  
I mourn thee, that thou canst not help us then."

He spake ; but Balder answer'd him, and said :—  
"Mourn not for me ! Mourn, Hermod, for the Gods  
Mourn for the men on earth, the Gods in Heaven. 48  
Who live, and with their eyes shall see that day !  
The day will come, when fall shall Asgard's towers,  
And Odin, and his sons, the seed of Heaven ;  
But what were I, to save them in that hour ?  
If strength might save them, could not Odin save, 49  
My father, and his pride, the warrior Thor,  
Vidar the silent, the impetuous Tyr ?  
I, what were I, when those can nought avail ?  
Yet, doubtless, when the day of battle comes,  
And the two hosts are marshall'd, and in Heaven 49  
The golden-crested cock shall sound alarm.  
And his black brother-bird from hence reply,  
And bucklers clash, and spears begin to pour—  
Longing will stir within my breast, though vain.  
But not to me so grievous, as, I know, 50  
To other Gods it were, is my enforced  
Absence from fields where I could nothing aid ;  
For I am long since weary of your storm  
Of carnage, and find, Hermod, in your life

Something too much of war and broils, which make  
 Life one perpetual fight, a bath of blood. 506  
 Mine eyes are dizzy with the arrowy hail ;  
 Mine ears are stunn'd with blows, and sick for calm,  
 Inactive therefore let me lie, in gloom,  
 Unarm'd, inglorious ; I attend the course 510  
 Of ages, and my late return to light,  
 In times less alien to a spirit mild,  
 In new-recover'd seats, the happier day. "

He spake ; and the fleet Hermod thus replied :—  
 " Brother, what seats are these, what happier day ?  
 Tell me, that I may ponder it when gone." 516

And the ray-crowned Balder answer'd him :—  
 " Far to the south, beyond the blue, there spreads  
 Another Heaven, the boundless—no one yet  
 Hath reach'd it ; there hereafter shall arise 520  
 The second Asgard, with another name.  
 Thither, when o'er this present earth and Heavens  
 The tempest of the latter days hath swept,  
 And they from sight have disappear'd, and sunk,  
 Shall a small remnant of the Gods repair ; 525  
 Hoder and I shall join them from the grave.  
 There re-assembling we shall see emerge  
 From the bright Ocean at our feet an earth  
 More fresh, more verdant than the last, with fruits  
 Self-springing, and a seed of man preserved, 530  
 Who then shall live in peace, as now in war.  
 But we in Heaven shall find again with joy  
 The ruin'd places of Odin, seats  
 Familiar, halls where we have supp'd of old ;  
 Re-enter them with wonder, never fill 535



Our eyes with gazing, and rebuild with tears.  
And we shall tread once more the well-known plain  
Of Ida, and among the grass shall find  
The golden dice wherewith we play'd of yore ;  
And that will bring to mind the former life 540  
And pastime of the Gods, the wise discourse  
Of Odin, the delights of other days,  
O Hermod, pray that thou may'st join us then !  
Such for the future is my hope ; meanwhile,  
I rest the thrall of Hela, and endure 545  
Death, and the gloom which round me even now  
Thickens, and to its inner gulph recalls.  
Farewell, for longer speech is not allow'd !"

He spoke, and waved farewell, and gave his hand  
To Nanna ; and she gave their brother blind 550  
Her hand, in turn, for guidance ; and the three  
Departed o'er the cloudy plain, and soon  
Faded from sight into the interior gloom.  
But Hermod stood beside his drooping horse,  
Mute, gazing after them in tears ; and fain, 555  
Fain had he follow'd their receding steps,  
Though they to death were bound, and he to Heaven,  
Then ; but a power he could not break withheld.  
And as a stork which idle boys have trapp'd,  
And tied him in a yard, at autumn sees 560  
Flocks of his kind pass flying o'er his head  
To warmer lands, and coasts that keep the sun ;—  
He strains to join their flight, and from his shed  
Follows them with a long complaining cry—  
So Hermod gazed, and yearn'd to join his kin. 565  
At last he sigh'd, and set forth back to Heaven.

## THE FORSAKEN MERMAN.

- COME, dear children, let us away ;  
Down and away below !  
Now my brothers call from the bay ;  
Now the great winds shoreward blow ;  
Now the salt tides seaward flow ; 5  
Now the wild white horses play,  
Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.  
Children dear, let us away !  
This way, this way !
- Call her once before you go— 10  
Call once yet !  
In a voice that she will know :  
“ Margaret ! Margaret ! ”  
Children's voices should be dear  
(Call once more) to a mother's ear : 15  
Children's voices, wild with pain  
Surely she will come again !  
Call her once and come away.  
This way, this way !  
“ Mother dear, we cannot stay ! 20  
The wild white horses foam and fret.”  
Margaret ! Margaret !
- Come, dear children, come away down.  
Call no more !  
One last look at the white-wall'd town, 25

And the little grey church on the windy shore ;  
 Then come down !  
 She will not come though you call all day ;  
 Come away, come away !

Children dear, was it yesterday 3  
 We heard the sweet bells over the bay ?  
     In the caverns where we lay,  
     Through the surf and through the swell  
     The far-off sound of a silver bell ?  
     Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep, 3  
 Where the winds are all asleep ;  
 Where the spent lights quiver and gleam ;  
 Where the salt weed sways in the stream ;  
 Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round  
 Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground ; 4  
 Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,  
 Dry their mail and bask in the brine ;  
 Where great whales come sailing by,  
 Sail and sail, with unshut eye,  
 Round the world for ever and aye ? 4.  
     When did music come this way ?  
     Children dear, was it yesterday ?

Childern dear, was it yesterday  
 (Call yet once) that she went away ?  
 Once she sate with you and me, 5c  
 On a red gold throne in the heart of the sea,  
 And the youngest sate on her knee.  
 She comb'd its bright hair, and she tended it well,  
 When down swung the sound of the far-off bell.

She sigh'd, she look'd up through the clear green sea ;  
She said: " I must go, for my kinsfolk pray       56  
In the little grey church on the shore to-day.  
'Twill be Easter-time in the world—ah me!  
And I lose my poor soul, Merman ! here with thee."  
I said : "Go up, dear heart, through the waves.       60  
Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind sea-caves."  
She smiled, she went up through the surf in the bay.  
Children dear, was it yesterday ?

Children dear, were we long alone ?  
" The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.       65  
Long prayers," I said, " in the world they say.  
Come !" I said, and we rose through the surf in the bay.  
We went up the beach, by the sandy down  
Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-wall'd town.  
Through the narrow paved streets, where all was still,  
To the little grey church on the windy hill.       71  
From the church came a murmur of folk at their  
prayers,  
But we stood without in the cold blowing airs.  
We climb'd on the graves, on the stones, worn with  
rains,  
And we gazed up the aisle through the small leaded  
panes.       75  
She sate by the pillar ; we saw her clear ;  
" Margaret, hist ! come quick, we are here ;  
Dear heart," I said, " we are long alone.  
The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan."  
But ah, she gave me never a look,       80-  
For her eyes were seal'd to the holy book !

Loud prays the priest ; shut stands the door.  
Come away, children, call no more !  
Come away, come down, call no more !

Down, down, down ! 85  
Down to the depths of the sea !  
She sits at her wheel in the humming town,  
Singing most joyfully.  
Hark, what she sings ; " O joy, O joy,  
For the humming street, and the child with its toy ! 90  
For the priest, and the bell, and the holy well ;  
For the wheel where I spun,  
And the blessed light of the sun !"  
And so she sings her fill,  
Singing most joyfully, 95  
Till the shuttle falls from her hand,  
And the whizzing wheel stands still.  
She steals to the window, and looks at the sand ;  
And over the sand at the sea ;  
And her eyes are set in a stare ; 100  
And anon there breaks a sigh,  
And anon there drops a tear,  
From a sorrow-clouded eye,  
And a heart sorrow-laden,  
A long, long sigh ; 105  
For the cold strange eyes of a little Mermaiden,  
And the gleam of her golden hair.

Come away, away children.  
Come children, come down !  
The hoarse wind blows coldly ; 110

Lights shine in the town.  
She will start from her slumber  
When gusts shake the door ;  
She will hear the winds howling,  
Will hear the waves roar. 115  
We shall see, while above us  
The waves roar and whirl,  
A ceiling of amber,  
A pavement of pearl.  
Singing ; " Here came a mortal, 120  
But faithless was she !  
And alone dwell for ever  
The kings of the sea."

But, children, at midnight,  
When soft the winds blow; 125  
When clear falls the moonlight ;  
When spring-tides are low ;  
When sweet airs come seaward  
From heaths starr'd with broom ;  
And high rocks throw mildly 130  
On the blanch'd sands a gloom :  
Up the still, glistening beaches,  
Up the creeks we will hie ;  
Over banks of bright seaweed  
The ebb-tide leaves dry. 135  
We will gaze, from the sand-hills,  
At the white, sleeping town ;  
At the church on the hill-side—  
And then come back down.  
Singing ; " There dwells a loved one, 140

But cruel is she !  
She left lonely for ever  
The kings of the sea."

INTRODUCTION TO THE NOTES  
ON  
BALDER DEAD.





## BALDER DEAD.

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### INTRODUCTION TO NOTES.

The story of Balder belongs to Scandinavian mythology. As Arnold himself tells us in a letter to his sister, his poem is based upon Mallet's version of the *Edda*, which are collections in prose and in verse of old Scandinavian myths and legends. The following passage from the *Edda* is quoted by the poet himself as the source from which he derived the story :—

“Balder the Good having been tormented with terrible dreams, indicating that his life was in great peril, communicated them to the assembled Æsir, who resolved to conjure all things to avert from him the threatened danger. Then Fregga exacted an oath from fire and water, from iron and all other metals, as well as from stones, earths, diseases, beasts, birds, poisons and creeping things, that none of them would do any harm to Balder. When this was done, it became a favourite pastime of the Æsir, at their meetings, to get Balder to stand up and serve them as a mark, some hurling darts at him, some stones, while others hewed at him with their swords and battle-axes, for, do what they would, none of them could harm him, and this was regarded by all as a great honour shown to Balder. But when Loki beheld the scene he was sorely vexed that Balder was not hurt. Assuming, therefore, the shape of a woman, he went to Fensalir, the mansion of Fregga. That goddess, when she saw the pretended woman, inquired of her if she knew what the Æsir were

doing at their meetings. She replied that they were throwing darts and stones at Balder without being able to hurt him.

“ ‘Ay,’ said Fregga, ‘neither metal nor wood can hurt Balder, for, I have exacted an oath from all of them.’

“ ‘What! exclaimed the woman, ‘have all things sworn to spare Balder?’

“ ‘All things, replied Fregga, ‘except one little shrub that grows on the eastern side of Valhalla, and is called mistletoe, and which I thought too young and feeble to crave an oath from.’

“ ‘As soon as Loki heard this he went away, and, resuming his natural shape, cut off the mistletoe, and repaired to the place where the gods were assembled. Then he found Hödur standing apart, without partaking of the sports, on account of his blindness, and going up to him said, ‘Why dost thou not also throw something at Balder?’

“ ‘Because I am blind,’ answered Hödur, ‘and see not where Balder is, and have, moreover, nothing to throw with.’

“ ‘Come then,’ said Loki, ‘do like the rest, and show honour to Balder by throwing this twig at him, and I will direct thy arm toward the place where he stands.’

“ ‘Hödur then took the mistletoe, and, under the guidance of Loki, darted it at Balder, who, pierced through and through, fell down lifeless.’”

Arnold's poem takes up the story from this point, merely glancing at the circumstances that had led to Balder's death. The sorrow of the gods is unutterable. Hödur, who had unwittingly caused the death of the beloved Balder, goes to Frea, the mother of the gods, to ascertain

whether he could not, by giving up his own life in exchange for Balder's, release Balder from the thralldom of Death and induce Hela, the goddess of the nether world, to restore him to heaven. Frea assures him that this cannot be, but she describes the road that must be taken to Hela's gloomy realm by one who wants to travel thither, and suggests one possible way in which Balder's release might be effected. The enterprise, however, cannot be undertaken by Hödur who is blind. Distraught with grief, and feeling that his presence in Heaven must be hateful to the gods, Hödur puts an end to his life; and the journey to Niflheim, where Hela sits enthroned, is undertaken by Hermod the fleetest of the gods. Mounted on Sleipner, Odin's eight-legged horse, Hermod traverses the dismal, dreary regions of ice and snow, while preparations are made for Balder's funeral, and, after overcoming all obstacles, he reaches at last the land of shadows, the joyless kingdom of the dead. Here he sees Hela and entreats her to restore Balder to the realms of light. Hela consents on one condition that all things in the world, animate and inanimate, should weep for Balder. When Hermod returns with Hela's reply, the gods are busily employed in discharging the last pious offices to Balder. One by one they pour out their lamentations over his dead body and take leave of him, and then placing his corpse on a pyre that had been built on the deck of his own vessel, they set fire to the wood and push the ship into the sea where it drifts on the deep waters, all ablaze, till it is utterly consumed. The next day Hela's reply is considered by the gods. Odin suspects treachery and proposes that, rather than assent to Hela's terms, they should fight their way into Hel and forcibly release Balder. The wiser counsels of his wife, however, prevail,

and they agree to accept Hela's terms as the only chance they have of winning back Balder. And now the gods ride forth, north, south, east, west, to entreat all things to weep for Balder. And everywhere the sounds of mourning are heard; and all things appear to weep for Balder. But Hermod, visiting in his quest every nook and corner of the world, comes at last to a forest where at the mouth of a cave sits a skinny hag, toothless and old. This is the witch or giantess Thök, the step-daughter of Loki, or Loki himself who has assumed her shape. Hermod tells her his errand and entreats her to weep, but Thök answers with a loud laugh that others may weep if they will, but she will not. Then Hermod knows that his mission has failed and that Balder must remain in Hela's kingdom till the end of the world. And the sorrow of the gods is made more bitter than before.

Hermod journeys once more to Hela's realm to acquaint Balder with the failure of their efforts to release him, and to bid farewell to him for ever. He bewails the fate of Balder, as one who is lost to happiness for ever, but Balder, who is loved and honoured by the spirits of the nether world and who feels that he is not wholly to be pitied by the gods, bids Hermod not to mourn for him but for the gods who, as he foresees, are doomed to destruction. His mild and gentle nature has no desire for the stormy life that is led by the gods in heaven, and he looks forward to a time when peace and happiness will prevail, when a second Asgard, a new Heaven, will arise, more beautiful than the heaven they had been accustomed to. Then Balder bids farewell to Hermod and withdraws into the gloomy shades of Hela's kingdom there to await the coming of the day when, after the destruction of all things, he, with a small remnant of the gods, will live to

enjoy greater happiness than before in the new and fairer heaven to be created.

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Balder, represented as being the wisest and gentlest and fairest of all the gods and beloved by them all, is believed to be a personification of the brightness and beneficence of the sun. His death, according to some, typifies the disappearance of the sun from the horizon during the winter months in the North.

"Balder is the best and wisest of the Æsir. His death is the great turning point of the drama, as it proves the mortal nature of the gods. The powers of evil could not prevail as long as he lived, but his death is the doom of all the Æsir. Loki and his brood of wicked monsters are at first subdued, but at last they burst their bonds, and the great catastrophe of Ragnarok ensues. After long winter and war between the gods and the collected frost giants, the forces of cold, fire, and darkness, in which both adversaries perish, comes the complete renovation of the world, in which the chief of the Æsir are hallowed and purified, and Balder returns from the under-world to inaugurate a reign of happiness and peace. It is probable that in the story of Balder there is an admixture of physical and moral allegory. Originally a nature-myth, it underwent a transformation through the addition of ethical conceptions, but the same early form continued to express the later religious ideas."—*Chambers's Encyclopædia*.

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In the story of Balder it is easy to discern traces of Christian influence. The *Eddas* and the *Sagas* in which are contained those old northern myths and legends, are

supposed to have assumed their present form between the years 800 and 1100 A. D. when Christianity must have spread far to the north and made its influence felt. Christian ideas became blended with heathen ideas and gave a new colouring, and, perhaps, a new significance to the old Scandinavian myths. In Balder himself, the son of the All-Father, loving and beloved by all, in his nature so pure and so gentle and so patient, in his descent into Hell, and in his restoration to Heaven after the day of Doom, we seem to see a faint reflection of the Christ Jesus of the Gospels.

Arnold's poem, published in 1855, is a poetic version of the story of Balder as it is told in the *Eddas*, with very slight variation from the original and with few embellishments. The subject is taken from Norse mythology, but the treatment of it is quite characteristic of Arnold. The poem is classic in its form and style, in the plain and simple language used, in the directness with which the story is told, in the images and similitudes employed, in the repetition of epithets and descriptive phrases, and in the numerous Homeric echoes which to those acquainted with classical literature are anything but faint. To the general reader who takes not interest in myths, the story itself, like most stories of the kind, will seem, perhaps puerile and lacking in human interest, while it contains little on the surface of it of ethical value or significance. There are some fine passages, however in the poem, notably that in which is described the burning of Balder's body on the deck of his own vessel, and there are some tender and pathetic passages also; but though the poem is a long one, there are no lines in it that can be said to haunt the memory, no lines which are striking by reason of the thought contained in them or of the language in which the thought is clothed. "Poets," says Arnold, in his Homer lectures

“ receive their distinctive character, not from their subject, but from their application to that subject of the ideas.....

‘ On God, on nature, and on human life’

Which they have acquired for themselves.”

If this remark be true, we shall search in vain for illustrations of it in *Balder Dead*. Two reflections on human life and human nature, occur which may, perhaps, be worth noticing. In l. 120, the necessity for repeated efforts, for trying and trying again in spite of probable failure, is insisted upon :—

“ But much must still be tried, which shall but fail.”

And again in ll. 426-27, Part III, we have a reference to a weakness of human nature, a disposition on the part of men to ascribe their sufferings to other than their true cause :—

“ But gods are like the sons of men in this—

When they have woe, they blame the nearest cause.”

In these two remarks, we may, if we choose, see some approach made to that ‘criticism of life’ which Arnold declared to be one of the chief functions of poetry.

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*Balder Dead* is written in Blank Verse, that is to say, in unrhymed lines of five iambic feet. The versification hardly calls for remark. The ordinary licenses of Blank Verse occur, but there are no striking deviations from the regular metre. With all his fastidiousness, Arnold’s appreciation of rhythm was anything but perfect, and it is easy to pick out from his poems lines that are prosaic and rhythmically defective.

The following are a few such instances from *Balder Dead* :—



- ‘Through the cliff-wall, and a fresh stream runs down.’  
 l. 82, Part I.  
 ‘And Hermod came down towards them from the gate.’  
 l. 3. Part II.  
 ‘Full the deck’s breadth and lofty ; then the corpse.’  
 l. 162, Part III.

### SCANDINAVIAN MYTHOLOGY.

The following brief account of Northern mythology, the mythology of the Scandinavian peoples inhabiting Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Iceland, taken from Blackie’s *Modern Cyclopædia*, will prove useful to the student in his study of Arnold’s poem. It is derived from the collections of the ancient Sagas known as the Eddas, which were to heathen Scandinavia what the Bible is to the Christian world.

According to the Scandinavian mythical cosmogony there were originally no heavens above, nor earth below, but only a bottomless deep (*Ginnunga-gap*) north of which was a world of mist (*Niflheim*) and south of which was the world of light or fire (*Muspelheim*). A warm wind blowing from the latter upon the ice of Niflheim melted it, and from the drops sprang Ymir, the ice-giant. Ymir was fed by the cow Audhumbla, which arose in the same way. As she was one day licking blocks of ice, human hair grew out of them, and then an entire man, called Buri. His son was Bor, who had three sons, Odin, Vili, and Ve, who became the rulers of heaven and earth. The children of Bor were good, those of Ymir wicked ; and they were constantly at war with each other. The sons of Bor finally slew the ice-giant, dragged his body into the deep, and from it created the world. Out of two trees Odin, Vili and Ve created a man, called Askur, and a woman, Embla. The earth was supported by a large ash, called Ygdrasil, whose branches extend over the world, while its top reaches

above the heaven. The residence of the gods was Asgard, whence the bridge Bifröst led to the earth. The giants dwelt in Jötunheim, or Utigard, and men in Midgard. As in Greek mythology there was an older and a newer dynasty of the gods. The ancient and modern systems seem to have their connecting-point in Odin, as with Zeus in the Greek system. Æsir or Aser is the name for the new race of gods. They are Odin, or Woden, the god of gods, the *Alfadur* (All-father) who lives for ever; from him and his wife Frigga are descended the other gods. Among their sons are Thor, god of thunder, whose hammer, Mjölnir, crushes the hardest objects, and Baldur, the youthful and beautiful god of eloquence. Niord is the god of winds, of sailors, of commerce, and of riches; his son Frey, is the ruler of the sun, and upon him depend rain and sunshine, plenty or dearth. Freya is the goddess of love. The mildest and most bountiful of the gods, she is a friend of sweet song, and loves to hear the prayers of mortals. Tyr, a son of Odin, the fearless god who wounds by a look, is lofty as a fir, and brandishes the lightnings of battle. He is not properly the god of war, but rather of power and valour. His brother Braga is the god of wisdom and poetry. Braga's wife is Iduna, who preserves the apples of immortality, which she offers in vessels of gold to the heroes at their entrance into Valhalla. The Valkyrias or 'choosers of the slain' are awful and beautiful beings, neither daughters of heaven nor of hell. Mounted on swift horses, they conducted the heroes to Valhalla. Another striking figure is Loki, as beautiful as he is malignant. By the giantess Angerbode he had Hela, the goddess of the lower regions, the wolf Fenrir, and the terrible serpent of Midgard, Jormungandur, which surrounds the whole earth. Hela rules in

Nifheim. All who died of sickness and old age, and not in war, descend to her dark mansion. Other mythical personages were the Norns or Fates, and Heimdall, who keeps watch on the bridge Bifrost. According to the popular belief the world and all the gods were destined to finally perish in a final crash of doom, the 'twilight of the gods.'

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The myths of Scandinavia, like the myths of other countries, are susceptible of various interpretations. Odin and the other gods may be regarded as personifications of the active forces of nature, or of the different functions and aspects of the unseen power behind all nature. Another view to take is that these myths rest on an historical basis, that Odin and his sons were real persons, kings and heroes, who lived at some very remote period, who spread their conquests over the north of Europe, and in course of time became deified. There are many ideas and beliefs that are common to the mythologies of all countries, and it is easy to see in the myths of Scandinavia many things that are to be found in the myths of India and of Greece. The probability is that the invaders from the East, when they overran the North, carried with them the popular beliefs of India and Persia and Central Asia. These beliefs in course of time would become modified and take their colouring from local conditions. To take one circumstance, that of climate, the inclemency of the North, making the struggle for life harder, would naturally impart to gods and legendary heroes, to their beliefs and to their actions, a fierceness and sternness of character foreign to the milder natures of the South, where the conditions of life are easier and more favourable to the growth of the gentler virtues. In later times again

these myths would undergo further modification, would become softened and more refined, as they came under Christian influence and adapted themselves to Christian ideas and Christian beliefs which supplanted the old heathen faith.

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To the story of Balder with which we are more particularly concerned, more than one meaning may be attached. We may see in it, with Max Müller, nothing more than a figurative representation of the contest between Summer and Winter. Balder, the originator of all that is beneficent and good, from whose person brilliant light streams forth, is the sun who gives life to all nature and who makes the earth bring forth her increase. Hödur, the blind god, who unwittingly slays Balder, is dark winter that knowing not the evil that it does, extinguishes the light of the sun and makes the whole world sad and dreary, even as heaven was made unhappy by Balder's death. But Balder will be restored to life and will reign again: so also will the sun shine again after winter has passed, to gladden the earth and make all nature rejoice. Another and more elaborate allegorical interpretation is as follows: Balder, meek and gentle, is the god of peace, but of peace that is attainable only through and by means of war. The gods love Balder, that is to say, they are alive to the blessings of peace and would gladly preserve it. They know, however, how easy it is to destroy peace, and what slight causes may put an end to it, and they take all possible precautions to secure Balder from harm. But who or what is there in this world that can escape the poisoned shafts of malignancy. Loki of the evil heart, Loki the slanderer, working through Hödur, the god of war, brings about the death of Balder by means of a twig of the mistletoe. So trivial, indeed,

are the causes that operate to destroy peace. Peace being slain, a terrible war ensues in which the gods are overwhelmed by the giants. It is the old, old struggle between light and darkness, between good and evil in the world. The powers of darkness at first prevail, and heaven and earth and all things are involved in ruin, but, from the ruin of the old, a new world is destined to arise. The old order must change and give place unto the new. Balder will be restored to life. Peace, that is, will return and eventually prevail, and a new world will come into existence, brighter, happier, more beautiful than the world that had gone before. There shall be no more wars or rumours of war, and blood-shed and violence and all evil passions shall depart for ever with the brutal blood-thirsty gods and heroes of the old Valhalla.

## NOTES.

### 1. SENDING.

1. So.....—The reader is supposed to know, or is supposed to have read the circumstances connected with the death of Balder, and the story begins now with what took place after Balder's death. In the same way, Tennyson begins his *Morte D'Arthur* with the line,—

‘So all day long the noise of battle roll’d.’

3. Idly—To pass away time.

6. Mistletoe—A parasitical plant that grows on various trees. It was supposed to possess mystical powers and was intimately connected with many of the superstitious practices of the ancient Germans and of the British Druids by whom it was held in great veneration, more especially when it was found growing on the oak.

Lok—In Scandinavian mythology, Lok or Loki was the evil deity, and the father of Hel, or Hela, goddess of the infernal regions. He is a personification of the principle of evil, corresponding in some respects to Satan. Handsome in appearance, he is described as delighting in works of wickedness, partly directed against the other gods. In the beginning he was beneficent and was united with the All-Father, but like Satan he fell from his high estate and became crafty and destructive as a desolating flame. *Loki* means fire.

The Accuser—In the *Edda*, it is said:—“Some reckon Lok in the number of the gods, others call him the *calumniator of the gods, the accuser of gods and men*. He surpasses all in that science which is called cunning and perfidy.” So also in the Bible, Satan is called the accuser of the brethren and is represented as a kind of backbiter or detractor.

7. Hoder—or Hodur, the twin-brother of Balder and the God of Darkness. Hoder typifies night, as Balder typifies day.

Unwitting—Unknowing,—unknowing, that is, what the effect would be.

8. **No charm**—No magic power to protect itself.

11. **Valhalla**—In Scandinavian mythology, the palace of immortality inhabited by the souls of heroes slain in battle. From Icelandic *valr*, slaughter and *höll*, a royal hall. The name is now given figuratively to a hall or building in which are preserved statues and other memorials of a nation's heroes.

**Rang**—Echoed, resounded.

13. **Meats**—Food in general,—not necessarily the flesh of animals.

14. One of the delights of the slain heroes in Valhalla was to drink wine or ale out of the skulls of their enemies.

**The wine**—Nominative to *stood* understood.

16. **Otherwise.....**—It was not Odin's desire that they should go on wailing. He disapproved of it.

**Odin**—or Woden, the chief God in Scandinavian mythology. He was not the creator of the world, but its ruler, and king of heaven and earth. As God of War, he held his court in Valhalla. From *Woden*, we get *Wednesday*, i.e., Oden or Woden's day.

17. **The Father.....**—The father of all men and of all the world for all time, from whom proceed all greatness and all excellence. He is frequently referred to as the All-Father.

19. Valhalla was meant to be a place of rejoicing, a place in which brave warriors after death would revel in the tumultuous joys in which they took most pleasure while on earth. It was never intended to be a place of mourning.

22. **So bright, so loved.....**—A god so loved by all. In the *Eddas* he is described as being 'so bright that he darts forth rays of light.' Balder is believed to be a personification of the brightness of the sun.

24. **The Nornies**—The Norns or Nornies of Scandinavian mythology, whose decrees were irrevocable, correspond to the *Parcæ* or Fates of classical mythology. They are three young women, by name, *Urd*, *Verdandi* and *Skuld*,—that is, Past, Present, and Future. They are represented as sitting by the well of *Urd*, under the world-tree *Ygdrasil* in *Asgard*, where they determine the fate both of gods and men.

**Spun**—Life is compared to a thread that is first spun, then drawn out to a certain length, and then clipped when the

required or prescribed length is reached. Like the Fates of classical mythology, one of whom, Clotho, spun the thread of life while the second, Lachesis, determined its length, and the third, Atropos, cut it, when completed, the Nornies are here represented as controlling and regulating the lives of gods and men.

25. **Set seal**—Confirmed and made fast.

28. **Your doom**—The Gods of the Scandinavians were not imperishable. They too would be destroyed in their appointed time. Their 'doom' is referred to in Part III. of the poem. See also Introduction.

33. **Another's portion**—The doom or lot assigned to another. If when our time comes, we can meet our doom bravely, without shedding tears like women, why should we weep and wail over the doom of Balder.

34. **Fits**—Befits, becomes.

**Your hour**—The brief space of time during which it is permitted you to weep. See l. 27.

36. **Erst**—Before, formerly. A. S. *ærest*, the superlative of *ere*.

38. **Though Gods**—As gods they were supposed to be free from hatred and other human passions.

41. In scanning the line, *seashore* must be taken as a spondee, there being no accent on *the*.

42. **Funeral-pile**—A pile of wood for a funeral pyre.

It was a custom of the northern nations to place the body of a dead warrior on a pyre built on the deck of a vessel, and to let the vessel drift out to sea, after setting fire to the pyre.

45. **For that is**—Such was the honour that heroes desired should be paid to them when they were dead.

46. **Straightway**—At once, directly.

47. A very weak, prosaic line.

**Sleipner**—Odin's grey horse, which was said to have eight legs and could carry its master over sea and land. *Sleipner* with its eight legs is supposed to typify the wind which blows from eight principal points.

49. **Lidskialf**—The palace of Odin in Asgard where he sat on his throne as ruler of heaven. From this place, his



two black ravens. Hugin (thought) and Mûnin (memory) flew forth daily to gather daily tidings of all that was done in the world. The name, written also *Hlidskialf*, means 'the terror of nations.'

52. **Midgard**—In Scandinavian mythology, a place lying midway between Asgard, the abode of the celestials, and Utgard, the abode of the giants. It was the abode of the first pair from whom sprang the human race. The name literally means *middle ward*.

53. **Conjuring Lapps**—The Lapps or people of Lapland who are given to conjuring, that is, to the practice of magic and witch-craft. Lapland was said to be famous for witches. Reference to this belief is found in *Paradise Lost*, Bk. ii. ll. 662—665:

"Nor uglier follow the night-hag, when, called  
In secret, riding through the air she comes,  
Lured with the smell of infant blood, to dance  
With Lapland witches."

54. **Antlered reindeer**—Reindeer with branching horns. The Laplanders use sleighs or sledges drawn by reindeer.

55. **The Finns**—The Finns are known to be a very religious people, peace-loving and of a somewhat sluggish and phlegmatic temperament. They are a fair haired race, with blue eyes.

presided over the field of battle, selecting those destined to death and conducting them to Valhalla, where they attended on the heroes at their feasts, serving them with mead and ale in skulls.

**Crowned**—Filled to the brim.

**Mead**—A fermented liquor made from honey and water, which has been in use from very ancient times.

69. **Pent-up hearts**—Hearts in which their feelings of sorrow were pent-up, that is, shut up or confined and not allowed to pour out freely. 'Hearts composed and stern' l. 35.

**Tearless eyes**—'Cold dry eyes' l. 35.

71. **Sacred night**—The epithet does not appear to have any special significance. It is applied also to the morn.

73. **Asgard**—(*Lit.* gods' yard, or the abode of the gods), in Scandinavian mythology, the home or city of the *Æsir* or gods. It was here that Odin and the gods dwelt, and here also was Valhalla.

81. **Gully**—Connected with *gullet*, the throat. A channel worn by water, a gorge.

82. A harsh, prosaic line. The accents are to be placed on *cliff, wall, fresh, stream* and *down*.

85. **Frea**—or Frigga, as the name is usually written, the wife of Odin and goddess of the earth and of marriage. She was frequently confounded with, and latterly quite identified with Freya or Freyja, the goddess of love and dispenser of all joys, delights and pleasures. From Frigga, confused with Freyja, we get Friday, the name of the sixth day of the week, dedicated to Odin's wife. Fensaler meaning 'the divine abode,' was Frigga's palace.

89. **Eterne**—A poetic form of *eternal*.

90. **Sacred fire**—Like other manifestations of natural forces, fire was deemed sacred and worshipped in the earliest times in various countries and among various nations. We read of perpetual fires being kept burning by the ancient Peruvians and Mexicans, fire being regarded as the protector of collective existence. In ancient Rome, the sacred fire was kept constantly burning in the sanctuary of Vesta, the goddess of the hearth, by her priestesses known as the Vestals.

93. **Revolving**—Turning over in her mind. To Frigga was given the knowledge of all things to happen in the future—see line 108.

95. **Bale**—Misfortune and misery. With this is joined the idea of being of evil or of fatal influence to others.

98. **Witless**—Wanting in thought and understanding.

100. **That**—So that.

105. Some such words as 'I know not' are understood.

109. **Hela**—The Scandinavian goddess of the dead. She was the sister of the Wolf Fenrir, and the daughter of the evil-hearted Loki. Odin, the All-Father, hurled her down into Niflheim and gave her authority over the lower world. She is described as being of a fierce aspect, with a skin half black, half flesh-coloured. The English word Hell is connected with the name of the goddess. "After the introduction and diffusion of Christianity, the ideas personified in Hela gradually merged, among all the races of Scandinavian and German descent, in the local conception of a Hell, or dark abode of the dead."

**A compact strike**—Make a bargain.

114. **Long portioned.....death**—Whose lot or doom of death had long before been decreed by Fate.

**Long**—Long before.

**Portioned with**—Assigned or destined to.

118. **This life**—This life in Heaven. Hela does not consider that life in Heaven is a fair exchange for life in her gloomy realm.

123. The joys of Heaven were of a tumultuous character consisting in feasting and fighting. There were no peaceful pleasures, no quiet rest and happiness.

124. It was believed that all the gods were destined to finally perish in a final crash of doom, the 'twilight of the gods.'

125. **That one should grudge.....**—That one should be unwilling to sacrifice it.

127. **Fate withstands**—The decrees of fate are unalterable and oppose or stand in the way of your purpose.

128. **One way**—One way in which you may effect your purpose.

130. Success cannot always be counted upon, but this should not prevent trials and efforts being made, even though they may be doomed to failure. There is much of wasted effort in this world, much of things attempted and never accomplished. Yet must we try and try again in spite of failure.

**Still**—Ever.

134. **Straight**—At once.

141. **Bifrost**—(Bif-roust). The bridge between Heaven and Earth (Asgard and Midgard). It is supposed to represent the rainbow, the various colours of which are the reflections of its precious stones. (Icelandic, *bifa*, tremble, and *rost*, path).

**Heimdall's watch**—Heimdall was the god who stood as sentinel at the bridge of Bifrost, to prevent the giants from forcing their way into heaven. He slept less than a bird, saw even in his sleep, could hear the grass grow, and even the wool on a lamb's back. He lived in the celestial fort Himinsborg under the farther extremity of the bridge Bifrost, and kept the keys of heaven. He was to wake the gods with his famous horn or trumpet at the end of the world.

146. **Deep-engulphed**—Swallowed up.

148. **Giall's stream**—The infernal river of Scandinavian mythology, spanned or crossed by Giallar bridge, or the bridge of death, which all must pass to get to Helheim.

151. **Heia's realm**—Niflheim. See l. 170.

155. **Watch**—Keep his eye fixed on.

**The northern Bear**—The constellation known as the Great Bear (*Ursa Major*) is meant; It is situated near the North Pole and is remarkable for its well-known seven stars, popularly called the *Wagon* or *Charles's Wain*.

156. **Frozen height**—The Great Bear is in the extreme north, near the pole, and belongs, as it were, to the regions of eternal snow and ice.

157. **Confronts**—Faces.

**The Dog**—Sirius, the Dog-star, the brightest star in the

heavens, situated in the constellation *Canis Major* or the Greater Dog.

**Hunter**—The constellation Orion, situated in the southern hemisphere. Orion was a hero of Greek mythology who, according to some writers, was a hunter of colossal stature. After he was slain by Artemis, he was placed with his hounds in the heavens as a constellation which bears his name.

The Great Bear, facing these stars or constellations, is represented as watching them jealously.

158. **And is alone**.....—Which is the only constellation that does not set or plunge into the ocean and disappear from view. This is not strictly correct. There are other stars which are never seen in northern latitudes to dip into the ocean.

159. **Strand—Shore.**

160. The Scandinavian belief in regard to the ocean appears to have been very much the same as that of the ancient Greeks who regarded the earth as a flat circle encompassed by a *river* perpetually flowing round it, and this *river* was Oceanus. Out of, and into this river the sun and the stars were supposed to rise and set; and on its banks were the abodes of the dead.

**Enfolds—Surrounds, encompasses.**

161. **Marge—Margin or shore.**

**The ancient giants**—These were the Jotūns, immense giants and magicians who had command over the powers of nature, and lived in dark caves in their kingdom Jotunheim, from which they waged perpetual war against the Æsir, the bright gods of Valhalla. Originally they represented the obstructive forces in nature.

164. **Chinked—Full of cracks and fissures.**

**Waste—Wilderness or dreary expanse.**

167. **Grate—A gate or frame-work furnished with cross-bars.**

172. **Nifheim**—The region of endless cold and everlasting night ruled over by Hela. It consisted of nine worlds to which were consigned those who died of disease or old age.

Nifheim is properly a word of two syllables, but it must be pronounced here as a word of three syllables. It literally means *mist-home*.

178. **The Streams of Hell**—In the midst of Nifheim there was a well or boiling cauldron called Hvergelmer from which issued twelve poisonous springs which generated ice, snow, wind and rain.

**Hell.** The realm of Hel or Hela, corresponding to the Greek Hades.

174. **Shadowy tribes**—The shades of the departed, ghosts, spirits.

176. **Wailful**—Sorrowful.

177. **Eddying**—Whirling.

178. **Accost**—Address. Literally, to go up to the ribs or side of a person, from L. *ad*, to, and *costa*, a rib.

182. **If haply**—And perhaps. More fully expressed, 'And if (he does so), haply, that is, perhaps, he may.'

190. The grammar is not quite correct here. 'To whom thou' must be supplied after *and*.

194. **Those women old**—The prophetesses, l. 89.

203. **Loathed feasts**—Feasts that they could not partake of with any joy as their hearts were heavy with sorrow. See l. 13.

206. **Bier**—A frame on which a corpse is borne to the grave. It is connected with the verb to *bear*.

208. **Breidablik**—Literally *wide-shining*. The palace of Balder, which stood in the *Milky Way*.

**Graved**—Engraved.

209. **The enchantments**—The letters or words of magic charm.

211. **Postures**—Arrangements. An uncommon use of the word.

**Runes**—The letters or characters that formed the peculiar alphabet of the Norsemen. As only a few in those ancient times knew how to use these characters or knew what they meant, they came to be regarded as mysterious symbols in the eyes of the illiterate, and were supposed to possess magical powers. Skeat gives the following as the origin of the word:

"Mid. Eng. *runs*, counsel, A. S. *rün*, a rune, mystery, secret conference, whisper. Original sense 'whisper' or 'murmur,' hence a mystery, lastly an incised character, because writing was a secret known to few."

212. **Unhappy!** but—But how unhappy he was in not knowing the art.

215. **Bespake**—Spoke to, addressed. This is only a poetic use of the word. Ordinarily the word means (1) to speak or arrange for beforehand, and (2) to show beforehand, to foretell, indicate.

221. **Hermod**—A son of Odin and the messenger of the gods. Along with Bragi, he received and welcomed to Valhalla all heroes who fell in battle.

225. **Against**—Facing, opposite to.

230. Here we have the first of the similes that Arnold makes use of in imitation of the similes of Homer, similes which are made striking and beautiful by the introduction of circumstances not essential to the comparison.

**Honeysuckle**—Known also as the woodbine, a climbing plant having flowers of great fragrance.

231. **Brushes across**—Touches lightly as he passes.

232. **Shuffles**—Moves slowly, dragging himself along.

234. **That**—So that.

241. **Hest**—Behest, command.

245. **There.....divine**—There was something so authoritative in the words spoken as to assure me that it was a command proceeding from some god whom I must obey.

249. **Distraught**—Distracted.

251.2. Notice the number of *ands* that are used to connect sentences. This mode of connecting sentences is of the simplest kind and is frequently found employed in the Bible and all old writings.

258. **Moved in heart**—With his heart deeply stirred by sorrow.

269. **Who wrought.....**—Who obeyed her: who carried out her commands.

271. **Scalds or Skalds**—The poets and historians of the Scandinavians. They sang the praises of the gods, and celebrated the exploits of heroes.

273. **Intoned**—Chanted. To *intone* is to recite or sing in a particular way, drawing out or prolonging the notes.

275. **Dirge**—A funeral hymn, so called from the first word of a funeral hymn (Lat. translation of *Psalms*, v. 8) beginning with the word : *Dirige*, that is, direct.

279. **Sealed**.....—Closed her eyelids in sleep.

280. **Hard on**—Close on.

284. **The rays**—He had what is called a *nimbus* or *aureole*, that is, a circle of rays, a halo of light, round his head; something like that with which painters surround the head of Christ and the heads of Saints in their pictures.

286. **Over against**—Opposite to, in front of.

300. **The common rite**—The usual or customary religious practice. The immolation of widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands appears to have been a practice of great antiquity among several nations.

301-2. The recurrence of *but* four times in these two lines may be noted. The effect is unpleasant to the ear.

305-6. I know perfectly well that you would not be unwilling to meet death in any form, slow or speedy.

307. **So**—If or provided.

308-9. **Smooth thy way**—Make death easy, or make easy the path you must tread to Hela's gloomy world.

313. **Right bars this**.....—It is not merely your own desire to die that prevents me from saving you from death and prolonging your life in Heaven. There is the eternal law of what is right, of what is ordained as just and proper, which would hinder me in my purpose, if I sought to snatch you from death.

315. **Mouldering**—Decaying, or having the faded appearance of decay and death.

317. **Austere**—Stern, severe, rigorous.

**Presides**—Used here transitively for 'presides over.' There appears to be no authority for this use.



320. The thought here is not very accurately expressed. What was intended appears to be this :—‘The nobler souls of mortal men *who* have met their death on battlefield, now feast in Valhalla.’ The first of the two sentences joined together should be made an adjectival clause.

323. There below—In the nether world, in Hela’s ‘mouldering realm.’

325. Spent—Exhausted, worn out.

327. Solace—Comfort, consolation.

331. Lineaments—Features.

341. Balder’s track—The road taken by Balder’s spirit.

## II. JOURNEY TO THE DEAD.

2. Day drove his courser—The sun is represented as seated in a chariot drawn across the sky by swift horses with shining manes.

3. Gable-perch—The gable-shaped place in which he sat or roosted. A *gable* is that portion of a roof of triangular shape at the end of a building.

5. Hereafter—When the appointed time comes for the destruction of the gods.

14. Fray—An abbreviated form of *affray*, fight, combat.

21. Skulda—See note on Nornies, l. 24, Part I.

25. Fetlock—*Foot-lock*. The projection just above the hoof of a horse, at the back, with a tuft of hair on it.

29. Another line wanting in rhythm.

Otherwhile—At other times—an archaic word.

30. The tilt-yard—The enclosed space or court in which they engaged in combat, charging at each other on horseback, with spears or lances, like the knights of former days when they fought in the lists.

33. Igdrasil, or Ygdrasil, the giant ash tree that spreads over the whole world, symbolizing the universe, the branches of which reach down to the underworld or Scandinavian hell. Under this tree the gods assembled every day in council.

36. **Gladheim**—The home of gladness. The largest and most magnificent mansion of the Scandinavian gods. It contained twelve seats besides the throne of Odin. The great hall of Gladheim was called Valhalla.

44. **The twelfth day**—This is one of the very few points which Arnold departs from the Eddas where we are told that the funeral rites take place on the very same day of Balder's death. The poet found it necessary to allow time for Hermod to accomplish his long journey to and from Asa's kingdom.

47—65. This description of the felling of trees for Balder's funeral pyre is borrowed from Homer.

48. **Thor**—One of Odin's sons. He was the god of war and in that capacity, the defender of the gods against the frequent attacks of the giants. His principal weapon was a mace or hammer called Miollnir. The fifth day was sacred to this god, and hence it was called Thor'sday, our Thursday. The name is a contraction from *Thonar*, A. S. *Thunor*, under, Thor being the god of thunder.

49. **The giants know**—In the Eddas it is stated that one of the three things of great price which Thor has is the mallet Miollnir, "which the giants know when it is raised off; and that is no wonder for it has split many a skull of our fathers or friends."

56. **Lichen-bearded pines**—Pine trees with tufts of lichen growing on them, like beards. The lichen is a plant, very much like moss; which grows upon and adheres tenaciously to rocks and trees.

58. **Haled**—Hauled or dragged.

63. **Darkling**. This word is generally an adverb meaning 'in the dark,' but it is used here as an adjective in the sense *darkening*, that is, growing or becoming dark, or, perhaps, is used merely as a poetic form of *dark*.

72. **Brooked**—Allowed, suffered.

75. **Docile**—Meek, submissive. The horse knew on what hand the rider was bound.

78. **Fared**—Journeyed, proceeded.

38. **Strait**—Narrow.

39. **Walling rocks**—Rocks rising on each side like walls.

91—100. Another simile in the manner of Homer. There is really only one point of resemblance, the blocking of the way by the damsel and the choking of the mountain-pass by a waggon, but the comparison is made lively and impressive by all the circumstances mentioned, the season and time of the year, the untrodden snow, the struggling of the oxen, the shouts of the hinds, the steaming air.

92. **Kine**—Cows; it is a double plural made by adding *n*, short for *en* (A.S. *an*) to Middle English *ky*, A.S. *cy*, plural of *cu*, a cow.

93. **The Southern side**—The side exposed to the sun, and therefore warmer than the northern side sheltered from the sun. Here pasture would be found for cattle in winter, when on the northern side of the mountains the ground would be covered with snow.

95. **Hinds**—Peasants. The final *d* in *hind* is excrescent. M.E. *hine* a domestic, from A.S. *hina*, a genitive plural standing for *hina man*, a man of the domestics.

107. **Thou hast.....**—You have not the appearance of a ghost or spirit: You have the flesh, the corporeal form and substance of a living being, with the fresh hues of life.

108. **The vital air**—The air that sustains or is essential to life.

110. **Souls bound below**—Not souls secured or held fast in, but souls destined for the nether world.

125-6. **Nor lit. . . .**—These lines are not very clearly worded. In the first place *nor* should be *not*. What is stated is that the white mist was not lit by the sun, but by the dim light of the stars shining through the darksome air, and vapour blotted.

126. **Vapour-blotted**—Dimmed or darkened by the vapour in the air.

129. **Ridging**—Forming into ridges of ice.

130. **Vergelmer**—The well or boiling cauldron in Niflheim, from which issued twelve poisonous springs or rivers, which generated ice, snow, wind, and rain.

136. **Greeted**—The use of this word here may be objected to as inappropriate. To *greet*, as generally used, is to address in a friendly and familiar manner, at *first meeting*, not at *parting*.

7. Took post—Stationed herself.

0. Blotted—‘Vapour-blotted,’ l. 126.

1. The streams of Hell—The twelve rivers that issued from the well or fountain Vergelmer. In the poem, however, five streams are mentioned.

6. Shadowy tribes—Troops of ghosts or spirits.

7—164—Another fine simile, borrowed, however, from *Æt*.

7. Bulrush—A species of *rush* which is a kind of plant that grows in wet or marshy ground along the banks of pools and streams. It is usually supposed to be so called on account of its size, *bul* denoting something large, but according to Skeat, *bulrush* is literally ‘stem-rush,’ from Danish *stem*, trunk.

0. Bulrush-crest—The flowering or woolly fruiting heads with which the stems are provided.

3. Twittering ghosts—Ghosts emitting feeble sounds.

15. Ungraven shields—Blank shields, that is to say, shields on which no armorial bearings or devices were carved or emblazoned, showing that their owners when on earth had performed no feat of arms. Compare what is said in Tennyson’s *Gareth and Lynette* of the practice prevailed in King Arthur’s Court:—

“For this was Arthur’s custom in his hall;  
When some good knight had done one noble deed;  
His arms were carven only; but if twain  
His arms were blazon’d also; but if none  
The shield was blank and bare without a sign.”

16. Known to glory—Who had made themselves famous as warriors, but whose misfortune it was to die in bed, and not on the battle-field.

17. Their star—Whose evil star proved treacherous to them, turning them up, as it were, to a dishonourable death, robbing them in the end of the reward they had looked forward to, a life with the gods in Valhalla.

19. Have chief regard—Are held in higher estimation, more honoured than the spirits of others.

21. Greeted of none—Not welcomed, not saluted or addressed in a friendly manner by any of the other spirits.

**Disfeatured**—With features marred or spoilt. An uncommon word.

172. It was a custom of the old Scandinavians to bury cowards alive in sloughs, that is, in muddy or marshy places, with hurdles covering their bodies. The virtues prized by those old heathens were the sterner virtues of courage, and fortitude and endurance of pain and suffering, not the gentler Christian virtues of meekness and forgiveness. For cowardice they had the profoundest contempt, and to cowards they showed no mercy.

173. **Wattled hurdles**—Hurdles made of plaited or interwoven twigs.

176. **Unhailed**—Without greeting or saluting them.

195. **Shed cheer over.....**—Diffuse gladness, cause joy to prevail in these dismal abodes.

203. **Unlikely**—Unpromising, not holding out, that is, any prospect of success.

208. **Fenris**—or more correctly Fenrir, a frightful demon-wolf, chained by the gods and cast down into Niflheim. He represents, perhaps, the remorseful pangs of guilty conscience.

**The Serpent huge**—The terrible serpent of Midgard, called Jormungandar or Midgardsomen (i.e., earth's monster) which surrounded the whole earth. It used to lie at the root of the celestial ash till All-Fader (Odin) cast it into the ocean, where it grew so large that in time it encompassed the whole world, and was for ever biting its own tail. As the offspring of Loki, the evil one, it may be supposed to correspond to sin or death, the offspring of Satan, that pervades the whole world.

210. **In your despite**—In spite of your efforts.

**Hath wax'd amain**—Hath grown in strength.

215. **Made fast to.....**—Fenris was fastened to a rock with ten chains, and was doomed so to remain till the twilight of the gods appeared, the *Ragnarok*, the day of doom, when he would break his bonds. Then the heavens would disappear, the earth would be swallowed up by the sea, the elements would be consumed by fire, and even Odin with all his kindred deities would perish.

216. **Limber**—Flexible. The word is connected with *limp*, not stiff or rigid.

7. Subsists—Is allowed to exist. The word is appropriately used. It implies that Lok continues to live for a while in heaven by sufferance of the gods, not by any right of his own.

10. Needle-rocks—Sharp pointed rocks.

1. According to the *Edda*, after the death of Balder, the gods took vengeance on Lok, who had taken the form of a woman. They pursued him, and, having caught him in a cave, they fastened him in a cave upon pointed rocks with a serpent stretched above him which constantly dropped its venom on his face, poison as bitter as gall. Here Lok was doomed to lie till the twilight of the gods.

4. Muspel's children—Muspel was a region of fire and lay on the south of Ginnunga-gap, the vast chaotic space which existed before the present world, separating it from Niflheim. From Muspel, at Ragnarok, Surtur, would kindle flames and set fire to the universe.

ourne—Properly limit, boundary : then the object aimed at.

16. And ask.....—And do the gods who have injured us readily seek our assistance now? Can they expect us to atone for our wrongs and help them?

17. We abide our day—We await the day of reckoning, that is, till the appointed time comes for vengeance.

18. We do not.....—Our hatred is not of that weak and feeble nature that finds gratification in inflicting useless suffering. We in our deep and relentless hatred wait till we effect the complete destruction of our foes.

19. Petty pangs—Slight pains or sufferings which little they have no effect whatever in improving our condition, are of no avail in ruining the gods.

15. Fails but.....—If there is one single thing in heaven or earth that fails to mourn the death of Balder.

18. Beweep—Weep for or weep over. The word is properly used.

10. Bend my heart—Subdue my heart,—make it, that is, submissive to the wishes of the gods.

13. Me—Dative, *for me or to me*.

14. Bid Balder hail—Hail or greet Balder. The expression is an unusual one. We hail a person, we do not bid him hail.

245. Withheld—Forbidden.

251. Like as—An archaic expression. *Like* is an adverb here, meaning 'in the same manner.'

264. Gild me—Merely to please or to flatter me, do not give to my death a specious or deceitful appearance. Do not pretend that my condition in Hela's realm is something that I have reason to be thankful for, something that I have reason to be proud of. The *me* here is merely an expletive, used after the manner of the Elizabethan writers.

265. A captured man—A man made captive in war and treated as a slave.

268. I count not—I do not consider these terms.

271. Double-minded—Full of duplicity.

272. Double—Equivocal or deceitful. Appearing as one thing but being in reality something else.

280. Inscrutable regard—A look the meaning of which it was impossible to make out. A face unfathomable in its expression. *Regard* is used here in the sense of look or gaze, from Fr. *regarder*, to look, look at, or view.

300. Crofts—Small farms.

303. As winged—As if winged.

307. Held—Occupied.

### III. FUNERAL.

1. Knots—Clusters, groups.

3. Another harsh line. The omission of *down* would improve it.

4. The serpent—See note l. 208, Part II.

8—19. There is nothing very striking or appropriate in this simile. The only point is the comparison between Hermod 'who comes single back from Hell,' and a farmer who comes 'unfollowed home, after losing his dog,' and the comparison is tame. The best part of the simile, that which stands out most prominently, is the description of the dog, spent and panting, but nothing is compared to the dog. It is the dog and not the farmer that holds the first place and draws attention, but no resemblance is expressed or implied between Balder and the dog.

14. A tremble—Trembling. An uncommon word.

20. Moved with wrath—Lok, being evil-hearted, had spoken mockingly and contemptuously of Hermod's mission.

He was not in sympathy with the gods. This kindled the anger of the neighbour whom he had addressed.

26. **To sink or swim**—So in the Middle Ages throughout Europe, there prevailed, among other modes of trial, what was known as the *water ordeal*. The accused person, especially in a case of witchcraft, was flung into a river or pond. If he floated, he was judged innocent, but if he sank, he was declared guilty and punished.

27. **If clear from.....**—If innocent of any design against the life of Balder.

28. **Devisedst**—Planned.

29. **Against fate**—In opposition to the decrees of fate, that is to say, to what fate had decreed as the term of his existence.

30. **Soft**—In a low or subdued tone. The word does not seem very appropriate.

49. **May keep**—May wait, may lie over for consideration.

55. **Out of our sight**—Burn him till he is completely consumed, or till we can see him no more.

**That we may turn.....**—It is not god-like, nor is it manly, to indulge in grief long. So long as we live, we have duties to perform, and our sorrow for the dead must not make us neglectful of these duties.

56. **Erst**—Before, at first.

57. **Donned**—Put on. To *don*, is to do on, as *doff* is to do off, to take off.

58. **Corslet**—Armour for the body.

68. **The twilight of the Gods**—Ragnarok, the day of doom, when the light of the gods will be extinguished and the whole world will be annihilated.

69. **Beleaguer**—Properly, to encamp around, to surround a place with an army, to besiege, to invest. Here the word appears to be used in the sense of *invade* or *assail*.

71. **Near the next**—An awkward collocation of words. The next to come near or approach the corpse was Thor. It may be noticed that while Odin and Freya are referred to in the third person, Thor is addressed in the second person. There appears to be no reason for this difference.

72. **Thy chariot**—Thor was represented as driving a golden chariot drawn by two white he-goats.



79. Proud and angry feelings prevail in heaven among the gods and heroes. The life they lead, their daily occupation of fighting, engenders these passions.

86. **To compose**.....—To adjust their differences, to settle their quarrels and soothe their angry feelings.

87. **Be ye**—Thor now addresses the gods, and bids them be kind to one another. The words ascribed to Thor do not seem appropriate to a war-god who delighted in battle. The speech is feeble.

90. **Freya**—The goddess of love, beauty, pleasure and fecundity. Odur, her husband, abandoned her on her loss of youth and beauty, and was changed by Odin into a statue, as a punishment.

103. **What thou wast**—How kind, how like a brother thou wast. See ll. 112-113.

104. **What he is**—Contrast his treatment of me with yours, and make him feel ashamed of his conduct.

126. **Regner**—This was Regner Lodbrok, a famous but half mythical king of Denmark. The story of his death is well-known. He is said to have fallen into the hands of Ella, king of Northumbria, who flung him into a dungeon or pit that was full of snakes and all poisonous things. Here in his agonies, he was supposed to have composed and sung a famous death-song.

There is something incongruous in the introduction of an historical person into scenes and among characters that are purely mythical or legendary. The speech, too, is not in keeping with the well-known character of Regner Lodbrok.

127. **The heathy isles**—Either the islands of the Baltic, or the Orkneys are meant.

128. **Living**—During his life-time or while he lived.

129. **Vast**—Vast or boundless space. The word is used here as a noun. Cf. the following passage from *Paradise Lost* :—

“ Michael bid sound,

The Arch-angel trumpet. Through the *vast* of heaven  
It sounded.’

132. **Scalds**—These were the Scandinavian poets or minstrels in the old heathen times. The word literally means

a 'loud talker,' or 'declaimer from Icel. *skajulla*, to resound, the chief business of the Scald being to relate the story of brave deeds and sing the praises of heroes.

133. **Brage**—or Bragi, one of Odin's sons and the god of poetry.

137. **They harp**—They strike the same note always : they play and sing of one theme only and that is war. 'To harp for ever on one string only' is quite an idiomatic expression meaning to dwell on the same subject always, to refer in conversation incessantly to one and the same thing, till it becomes wearisome.

141. **Thou didst strike**—You sang of other things and produced other strains of music.

143. **Joyance**—An old and poetical word for joy or joyfulness.

**Minded**—An archaic word. Reminded, brought back to memory.

**And youth**—The construction here appears to be faulty. *Of* would have been better than *and*.

148. **Thora**—His wife or some woman that he loved.

**Gothland Isle**—A Swedish island in the Baltic Sea.

149. **Aslauga**—A peasant girl that was loved by Regner Lodbrok.

155. **Had**—Would have. The whole day would have been spent in wailing, if Odin had not interfered and put an end to it.

157. **There well.....**—It is quite possible that there may be too much of sorrow. It is right to lament, but let our lamentation be in moderation, not in excess.

160. **But**—*And* would have been better.

169. **Stuff**—All his belongings, his goods, his furniture, his clothing.

173. **His ring**—Balder's ring. See l. 274. Part II.

179. **Furrowed it**—Cut or dug a trench in the sand.

182. **Squalls**—Sudden and violent gusts of wind, attended with dark, heavy clouds. These are known as Black squalls.

192. **Drove**—Drifted on the waters before the wind.

194. **Lurid**—With a pale, yellow, ghastly look.

202. *Ash*—The singular form is rarely used, "except in connection with chemical or geological products; as soda-ash, &c., or as a qualifying or combining word, as *ash-bin*, *ash-heap*, *ash-pit*, &c."

214. *Loathed feasts*—In their great sorrow the gods and heroes took no pleasure in what they feasted on. They hated the food they were obliged to eat.

217. *The ash Igdrasil*—See note l. 33, Part II.

219. *Mimir*—"The god of eloquence and wisdom. He was the guardian of a well in which wit and wisdom lay hidden, and of which he drank every morning from the horn of Gjallar. Odin once drank from the fountain, and by doing so became the wisest of gods and men; but he purchased the privilege and distinction at the cost of one eye, which Mimir exacted from him."

222. *Honey-dew*—This may simply mean 'dew as sweet as honey,' or it may be the sweet, saccharine matter that exudes from certain plants and trees and collects like dew-drops on their leaves.

226. *Both have grounds*—Reasons may be urged both for accepting and for rejecting the terms.

227. *Accept them*—If we accept them.

*Unfulfilled*—If they are unfulfilled.

230. *But, perhaps, you may ask how is it possible to fail in fulfilling the terms.*

231. *Smooth.....*—The terms appear to be so plausible and so easy of fulfilment.

237. *Were not this.....*—Would not this be a possible way of recovering Balder from Hela's realm.

240-1. *My sons,.....Heaven*.—From Odin and his wife Frigga, were descended all the other gods:—Thor, the god of thunder, Balder, the young and beautiful god of eloquence; Niord, the god of winds, of sailors, of commerce and of riches; Freir, the ruler of the sun, and the god of rain and sunshine; Tyr, the fearless god of power and valour; and Braga, the god of wisdom and poetry.

247. *Daughter*—She was born of Odin. See below, l. 284.

248. *Thou whirlwind*—Odin, fierce and uncontrollable in his wrath and impetuous, is compared to a whirlwind which sweeps everything before it in its fury.

**Transcends**—Surpasses, exceeds.

**The Gods**—The new race of gods called the *Æsir* or In Scandinavian, as in Greek mythology, there were ages or dynasties of the gods, the older and the newer.

**Ymir**—The ice-giant.

According to Scandinavian mythology, there were originally heavens above or earth below, but only an abyss formless deep, called *Ginnunga-gap*, north of which was land of mist called *Niflheim*, and south of which was *Muspelheim*, the world of light or fire.

A warm wind blowing from Muspelheim melted the ice of Niflheim, and from the drops sprang Ymir, the ice-giant. He was fed by the cow, Audhumbla, which arose in the same way. One day, as she was licking the blocks of ice, three hair grew out of them, and then an entire man, Hrafnagrimr, was born. His son was Bor, who had three sons, Odin, Vili, and Ve, who became the rulers of heaven and earth. The children of Bor were good, but those of Ymir were evil; and they were at constant war with each other. Finally the sons of Bor slew Ymir, the ice-giant, dragged his body into the deep, and from it created the world. The blood formed the water of the earth, his gore the earth, his bones the mountains, his teeth the rocks, his skull the heavens, his brains the clouds, his hair plants of every kind, and his eyebrows the walls of defence against the elements. Ymir may be regarded as the personification of evil, or the first created being, produced by the antagonism of heat and cold.

**Dividing clear**.....—Making a clear division, a distinction or separation between day and night, between the seasons run by each.

**The field of pirates**—A poetical name for the sea, as it were, by the vessels of the old Scandinavian sea-rovers, or Vikings as they were called, bands of rovers or pirates who scoured the seas in the 8th, 9th and 10th centuries.

**Bergelmer**—A frost-giant, father of the Jotuns, or race of giants.

**Thy deluge**—The great flood which Odin caused, in which he swept into destruction the race of Ymir.

5. The place referred to was called Jotunheim, the land of the Jotun or giants.

275. **Marge**—A poetic form of *margin*, border, verge.

280. **A subject tear?**—Will you dare to seize and snatch from her with violence, one who is lawfully her subject, one who is 'by right her prey?'

292. **Unliving**—Lifeless, inanimate.

293. **If thou haply.....**—And, perhaps, in this way you may effect your purpose.

297. **The all-ruling**—Odin was called the *Alfadr* (All-father), the god of gods and of men, who rules for ever.

304. **Struck**—Took their way, proceeded.

309. **Thaw**—The melting of snow or things congealed by a frost.

310. **A dripping sound**—The sound of water falling in drops.

312. **Is dibbled**—Is covered with holes. A *dibble* is an implement with which holes are dug in the ground for planting seed, and *to dibble* is to make holes as with such an implement.

313. **Shuffle down**—Move or slip down heavily and clumsily.

307—319. In this simile, the resemblance is in two points—(1) the dripping sound heard in winter when a thaw sets in and the dripping noise of all things weeping for Balder, and (2) the joy felt by the peasants and the joy felt by the gods.

320. **Niord**—The Scandinavian sea-god. He was not, however, god of the ocean, in the same way that Neptune was in classical mythology, but was more the spirit of water and air, and the god of winds, of sailors, of commerce, and of riches.

321. **Spits**—Long narrow shoals extending from the shore into the sea.

**Beaches**—Sandy or pebbly shores.

324. **Not.....Heaven**—Niord was not one of the *Æsir*, and did not belong to Heaven.

334. **Gibes**—Mocks, derides, flouts.

7. **Good lack.**—An exclamation expressive of surprise, signifying something of the force of "indeed!" Various explanations are given of the expression. According to some, *lack* is *lakken*, i.e., *lady kin*, the lady being the Virgin Mary. Cp. *by'r lakin*, by our lady. According to Møtzner, *good lack* is *lawk* deformed from *lord*, so *good lack* = *good lord*. Compare the expression *la!* common among sailors, which is said to be a euphemistic rendering of *lord*. Another explanation connects the expression with *alack*, where *lack* means to be in want, or to be destitute of, the thing being one of pity or shame called forth by an object in any way faulty or defective.

8. **Pleasuring**—Enjoying yourselves. Seeking pleasure.

9. **Fastidious**—Overnice, dainty. *Thok* speaks mockingly and sarcastically.

**Write**—Another form of *spirit*; written also *spright*.

10. **Sweet-breath'd cow**—A cow whose breath is sweet.

11. **Snuffs at it**—Inhales or breathes in the smell.

**Sniffily**—Fastidiously, squeamishly. The cow turns up her nose at the fresh sweet-smelling hay in the manger and sniffs the filthy straw at her feet.

12. **Squeamish**—Dainty, fastidious, over-nice.

**Snuff**—The same as *snuff*. Regard with contempt or aversion.

13. **Begrudge not**—Do not be unwilling to give. Do not withhold.

14. **The Gods' cross**—The affliction, the burden of sorrow which the gods had to bear.

**Cross** in this sense derives its meaning from the fact that the person condemned to crucifixion had to bear his cross to the place of execution.

15. **Flouts**—Mocks and derides.

16. **Why tarriest.....**—Why do you linger here on the skirts of Hell where a faint twilight shines, unwilling to delay to plunge into its innermost recesses, where darkness prevails?

17. **Cumber**—To prove burdensome and oppressive.

404. Substance—Material possessions, property.
408. Have any cause—If any have cause, he has.
409. When that—Archaic.
412. Fellow-sport—Yon who were joined with me as a victim of Lok's mockery and derision. Lok had used them both to gratify his malignant nature.
435. The still recesses—The inner regions of Hell where quiet prevails.
437. Like myself, they, too, will have inhaled the sweet, soothing, refreshing odours which borne on the air in advance, announce the coming of a god or a visitor from heaven.
441. Leaden—Dim, and dull, and heavy.
443. Make toward them—Move in their direction, approach.
446. Thou foresaw'st.....—See Part II. ll. 268—72.
461. Acceptance—Favourable reception, approval.  
Even in Hell, says Balder, I am received with the same favour, and regarded with the same liking and approval as in Heaven.
463. Iron—Harsh, stern, severe.
466. Ineffectual feuds—Their quarrels and dissensions so futile, so unavailing.
467. Shadows—The evil passions of men survive or still linger in the spirit-land to which their disembodied souls depart after death, but these passions, like their own ghostly forms, are weakened and attenuated, and are mere faint, shadowy semblances of what they were.
469. Solace—Comfort.
470. Function—Some duty to perform, some office to discharge. Balder was recognised as judge and arbiter of disputes in Hell.
472. Rusting—Doing nothing, idling away your life.
474. The final day—Ragnarok, the twilight of the gods. See Introduction.
476. The bridge of Heaven—The bridge Bifrost.
477. Fenris—Fenris, the frightful demon-wolf, the offspring of Lok, chained by the gods, and cast down into.

him, where he was to remain until the day of destruction.

. **Rymer**—The frost giant who at the end of the world to be the pilot of the ship *Naglefar*, the giants' ship in which they would embark on the last day to give battle to the gods. The ship was made of the nails of the dead.

. **The great serpent**—See Note, l. 208, Part II. and Introduction.

. **What were I—What would I be, of what possible could I be.**

. **Vidar**—"The god of wisdom and of silence. His senses are so penetrating that he reads the most secret thoughts of men. He wears very thick shoes, and hence is sometimes called 'the god with the thick shoes.'"—WHEELER.

.—"A son of Odin and younger brother of Thor. He was a prior deity, and the protector of champions and brave men. He was also noted for his sagacity. When the gods decided to bind the wolf Fenris, Tyr put his hand into the wolf's mouth as a pledge that the bonds should be removed. But Fenris found that the gods had no intention of giving up their word, and revenged himself in some degree by biting off the hand off."—WHEELER.

. **The golden-crested cock**—See ll. 4-6, Part II.

. **From hence**—Incorrect. From *here*, that is, from

. **Spears...pour**—Spears are hurled, or spears begin to fall through the air.

.1. Balder is of a milder nature than the other gods. He does not take the same delight in battle and in bloodshed as they do. His inability therefore to take part in the fight against the giants will not cause him the same pain or sorrow that the other gods would feel if they, like Balder, were shut up in Hell and rendered incapable of sharing in the delight of battle.

. **I am long since**—An incorrect expression. I have been weary.

. **Arrow hail**—Showers of arrows falling like hail.

. **Sick for calm**—They long or yearn for peace and tranquillity.



510. I attend.....—I shall wait in patience while the long ages roll.

\* 511. My late.....light—My long delayed restoration to the realms of light.

512. Less alien to—Less foreign to, or more congenial to.

A spirit mild—Like his, like Balder's.

517. The ray-crowned Balder—See Note II. 284-85, Part I.

523. The tempest.....—The storm of war and destruction which will overwhelm the world on the final day, the day of doom.

535. Never fill—We shall never be satisfied with, or never be tired of gazing.

539. Of yore—In former times. *Yore* was originally the genitive plural of A. S. *geor*, a year, and literally means 'of years, during years.' The expression 'of yore' is strictly, therefore, incorrect.

547. Inner gulph—'Interior gloom,' l. 553.

556. Fain had he.....—Gladly would he have followed.

558. Then—If this word was intended to be emphatic, what is meant is that then, at that time, *they* were fated to depart to the regions of gloom, and Hermod to Heaven, but the time would come when they with the other gods, would be overwhelmed in destruction, and Balder and Höder would be restored to the realms of light.

A power—Some power or influence over him which he could not resist, which held him spell-bound, as it were, or like one bound in chains.

560. And tied him.....—A change of construction which cannot be defended. The clause is an adjectival clause co-ordinate with 'which idle boys have trapped.' The object of '(have) tied' ought to be *which* not *him*.

562. That keep the sun—Where the sun continues to shine overhead, or from which the sun never does depart. The equatorial regions are meant.

563. Strains—Tries his best, makes violent efforts.

564. Follows them—That is, with his eyes, gazing wistfully at them.

. His kin—Not the gods in heaven, but Balder and Frigg.

—65. The one point in this simile is the yearning of Balder to join Balder and Höder and this is compared to the yearning of the entrapped stork to rejoin its companions in their flight. The feeling in Hermod's mind is a very natural desire that one has to be with those who are dear to him wherever they may be,—to share with them even in their loneliness and sorrow. Assuredly, Balder is not thinking of the happy time to come in the distant future which Balder described to him, no more than does the stork, separated from its companions, longing to rejoin them, think of the happy time it will have in the warmer regions of the South to which it is bound. It spoils the sentiment to suppose that, when Balder parted from those he loves, Hermod, at such a time, entertained any envious longing for the happiness that was eventually to be theirs. It seems unnecessary, therefore, to add into the simile more than was obviously intended, to imagine that, beyond the one point of resemblance, any correspondence was implied between the new world, the joyous future that Balder looked forward to and the warmer lands and brighter skies to which the storks are bound.

## THE FORSAKEN MERMAID.

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### INTRODUCTION TO NOTES.

The *Forsaken Mermaid* is a poem which tells pathetically of the grief of a Merman, that is to say, a man of the sea, a sea-creature, who had been deserted by the mortal woman he had married. She had lived with him as his wife for some years down in 'the sea-halls beneath the salt sea-tide,' and she had borne him children, but one day she heard the sound of a far-off bell from 'the little grey church on the windy shore,' and she was seized with an irresistible desire to return to her own people and worship with them as she had been accustomed to, before she betook herself with her Merman husband to the caverns under the sea. It was Easter-time, a very sacred season in the Christian Church when the hearts of all religious people are stirred by the services that commemorate the death and resurrection of Christ, and when she heard the church bells summoning the worshippers to church, it was brought home to her that she was imperilling her soul by continuing to live in unholy wedlock with one who was no human being and had no soul to save. Restored to her former life and occupations, she is happy in the thought that she has saved her soul, though at the expense of her love, but there are times when sad thoughts intrude themselves, and she looks out wistfully on the sea where those who were once so dear to her still live. The Merman, though so cruelly forsaken, loves with an unceasing love, hoping that his faithless wife will yet return to him, and, when-

ever he can, he comes ashore with his children to gaze at the white sleeping town where dwells the woman who so cruelly deserted him.

Among the popular myths of the Middle Ages in Europe was the belief in Mermen and Mermaids, creatures who were supposed to live in the sea, and who while more or less human in their feelings, were destitute of souls. The popular idea of a Mermaid, an idea that still lingers, was a creature with the face and body of a beautiful woman up to the waist, the remaining portion being like the tail of a fish with fins and scales. In pictures she is almost always represented with half her body above the surface of the water, combing her long and beautiful hair with one hand, while she holds a mirror in the other. The Merman of the poem, however, must in appearance be supposed to be like a man in all respects. These Mermen and Mermaids, it was believed, were capable of entering into social relationships with human beings, in certain circumstances and under certain conditions. In the folklore of Europe, in the Nursery Tales that are the delight of all children, we read of men enticed by the bewitching looks and voices of lovely Mermaids, and again of women who have lost their hearts to Mermen and who have been carried off by them to dwell in the deep caverns of the sea or in palaces at the bottom of the ocean, whose walls are built of corals and precious stones and whose pavements are of the finest sand strewn with pearls. All such unions, however, are dangerous, for Mermen and Mermaids have no souls and cannot hope for salvation, and the man or woman who enters into these relations, does so at the risk of his or her soul. One of the best known stories of this kind is a romance called *Undine*, but simpler stories will be found in

various collections of Nursery and Fairy Tales like those of Grimm and Hans Andersen. There is another of Arnold's poems, called the *Neckan* which belongs to the same class of mediæval myth and fiction.

The *Forsaken Merman* is written in lines of very unequal length composed of mixed feet. For the most part the metre must be pronounced to be anapæstic, but as the anapæst and the iambus are closely related, anapæstic and iambic feet will be found occurring together in the same line. The following are examples:—

We wént | up the beách | by the sán | dy down

Where the séa | -stocks bloóm | to the whíte |  
walled town ;

Though the nár | row paved stree<sup>t</sup>s | where áll |  
was still, |

To the lít | tle grey chúrch | on the wín | dy hill.

As in all irregular verse, other metres than the predominant one occur. Thus we have lines which are apparently trochaic or trochaic and dactylic combined:—

- (a) Nów my | bróthers | cáll from the | bay,  
Nów the | gréat winds | shóreward | blow,  
Nów the | sált tides | seáward | flow  
Nów the | wíld white | hórses | play.

- (b) Whére the | spént lights | quíver and | gleam,

Whére the | sált weed | sways in the | stream,  
Whére the | séa beasts | ránged all | round,  
Feéd in the | cóze of their | pásture | ground.

It is possible, however, to scan these lines differently, that is to say, as lines composed of iambic, or of iambic and anapaestic feet. All that is necessary is to treat the first foot as a foot of one syllable. This, perhaps, would be the better way of scanning the lines, as the predominant metre is anapaestic or iambic and anapaestic combined.

Sometimes we come upon lines containing what we may call mutilated feet, that is, from which syllables appear to have been cut off. In all such cases the place of the missing syllables is supplied by emotional pauses or emotional prolongations of sound.

The following are examples :—

(1) Már | garét, | Már | garét |

This line could easily be made regular by supplying words. Thus :—

Oh ! Mar | garet, dear Mar | garet |

(2) Dówn, | dówn, | dówn |

(3) A lóng | lóng | sígh.

These lines require to be read slowly, with appropriate pauses, the voice dwelling on the words and prolonging the sound.

## NOTES.

1. Let us away—Let us depart. (The Merman and his children are on shore).

2. Down...below—Down into the depths of the sea:—

\* \* \* “Down to the sea-halls  
Beneath the salt sea-tide.”

*The Neckan*, ll. 31 & 32.

6. The wild white horses—The rolling, rushing waves with their crests of foam and the spray dashed up are compared to wild horses at play, tossing their manes in the breeze as they gallop along madly, foaming and fretting, and flinging about the froth from their mouths.

7. Champ—Bite and chew impatiently, foaming at the mouth.

13. Margaret—His wife and the mother of his children, who has forsaken him and is now in the white-walled town adjoining the sea.

31. The sweet bells—The bells of the neighbouring church.

37. Spent lights—Lights which have become exhausted, as it were, which have lost their brightness in their passage through the water.

Quiver and gleam—Shine with a tremulous motion.

40. Ooze—Soft mud or slime.

42. Mail—Scaly skins or coverings that look like mail or chain armour which consists of steel rings interlinked so as to form a flexible covering.

45. Aye—The same as *ever*. Of Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon origin, the word is allied to the Latin *ævum*, an age.

54. When down.....—When suddenly the sound of a distant church-bell calling people to church was borne to her through the waters overhead.

58. Easter-time—The day or festival which commemorates the Resurrection of Christ. It is one of the most

important and sacred seasons in the Christian Church. *Easter* is supposed to take its name from *Eostre*, the name of a Saxon deity, the goddess of light or spring, whose festival was celebrated about the same time as the Christian festival, the name being retained when the character of the feast was changed.

**Ah me!**—As a Christian woman she longed to participate in the services and ceremonies of this holy day and grieved to be cut off from them. She feared that there would be no salvation for her, that her soul would go to perdition, if she did not go to church and say her prayers.

68. **Down**—Mounds or hillocks of sand near the seashore.

69. **Sea-stocks**—Certain plants that grow on the seashore.

75. **Aisle**—(Pronounced like *isle*). From L. *ala*, a wing, one of the two wings or lateral divisions of a church, separated from the nave or middle part by a row of pillars or arches.

**Leaded**—Set in lead.

81. **Were sealed to**—Were closely fixed or fastened on.

**The holy book**—The Bible or Prayer-book.

87. **Her wheel**—Her spinning wheel.

88. **She sings most joyfully forgetful of the Merman and the children she has forsaken.**

90-1. These are the things that occupy her mind now and afford her joy,—the humming sounds in the busy streets, the children at play, the priest and the services in church, her daily occupation at the spinning wheel, and the bright sunshine so different from the faint dim light of the deep sea-caverns, where she had for a time lived with the Merman.

94. **She sings till she is full of joy and is completely satisfied.**

100. **Set**—Fixed.

103. **Sorrow-clouded**—Darkened or made dim with sorrow.

106. **She thinks of the little daughter whom she has forsaken, and whom she yearns to see. Happy as she is, now that she is restored to her home and to her kindred and to her religion, there are times when sad and loving thoughts come to her of those whom she has so cruelly forsaken.**



118-19. The cavern in the sea where the Merman and his children live has a roof of amber and a floor of pearls.

**Amber**—is a yellowish resin, almost transparent, found in many places on the sea-shore.

122. **Alone dwell**—There can be no real, no lasting sympathy between the creatures of the sea and the creatures of the land. Divided in their interests, they must live apart. Unions for a time there may be, but such unions cannot be expected to last, and 'the kings of the sea,' must be content to live lonely lives in the sea, separated from those human beings of the earth with whom they would fain be connected.

123. **The kings of the sea**—Mermen.

127. **Spring-tides**—The tides at their highest, when the sun and the moon are in conjunction or in opposition, as at new moon and full moon.

129. **Starred with**—Bespangled or adorned with.

**Broom**—A shrub with bright yellow flowers.

131. **Blanched**—Made white.

133. **Hie**—Hasten.

The Merman still loves his wife though she has forsaken him, and still haunts the place, still comes ashore to gaze at the town wherein she dwells, and the church wherein she worships.

[In the middle ages, religion entered very largely into the lives of people, and this fact is brought out by the prominence given in the poem to the little grey church on the windy shore, and to the overpowering desire of the woman to save her soul. If any lesson is to be learnt from the poem it is this that our spiritual nature is of paramount importance. Love may be strong even unto death, but love and all earthly passions, are as nothing compared with our spiritual yearnings, which must be gratified at all cost.]

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